The Relationship among EFL Learners' Self-esteem, Autonomy, and Reading Comprehension

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Abstract—**The purpose of this study was to see whether any significant relationship exists among EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension; and whether there is any significant difference between EFL learners' self-esteem and autonomy in predicting their reading comprehension skill. For this purpose, 121 EFL participants who were studying English Language Literature and Translation at Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch, were randomly selected. The researcher tested different ranges of students with different levels of proficiency. The Coopersmith self-esteem inventory, autonomy questionnaire and reading comprehension section of Preliminary English Test (PET) were administered. Correlation and regression analysis demonstrated that there was a significant relationship among EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension. There was also a significant difference between EFL learners' self-esteem and autonomy in predicting their reading comprehension.**

Index Terms—**EFL learners, self-esteem, autonomy, reading comprehension**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview

Due to the significance of the reading skill in learning and assessing knowledge of foreign language, many researchers have been interested in determining and identifying factors influencing the process of comprehension (e.g., Block, 1992; Brantmeier, 2002; Burns, Roe, & Ross, 1999; Erten & Topkaya, 2009; Heidari, 2010; Lehr, Osborn, & Hiebert, 2005). There are some non-linguistic factors in reading, such as reader variable and text which affect the comprehension of readers (Anders, 2002). He added that reader variables are strategies used by readers; their background knowledge, motivation, personality, and self-esteem. According to him, self-esteem is one of the most important reader's variable.

Considering the learner's self-esteem, it is necessary to recognize how learners think about themselves and about language learning (Gestwicki, 1999). Therefore, there can be a relation between language learning and self-esteem. Brown (2000) mentions that "no successful activity can occur without some degree of self-esteem" (p.145).

Research findings have provided evidence that autonomy is of general concern in second or foreign language learning (Dafei, 2007; Wenden, 1998; Zhang & Li, 2004). Demo and Parker (1987) state that self-esteem and autonomy are interacting variables. In fact the degree of self-esteem can be affected by language learning and vice versa.

Little and Dam (1998) believe that the autonomous learner should have the ability to shape and direct the learning process, and evaluate their learning to compare it with their learning goals and the things they have achieved.

Taking the role of all mentioned factors into consideration, each of these attributes could be just as a piece of the puzzle. The correlation between reading comprehension as a target and any of these variables on the one hand and the relationship between each pair of them on the other hand can provide us with a more holistic yet precise approach toward reading.

B. Statement of the Problem

Many researchers have already investigated the relation between autonomy and reading comprehension on one hand and between self-esteem and reading on the other. Each of these factors has been individually examined in the literature. However, few researchers have investigated the relationship between autonomy, self-esteem and reading comprehension. As a result, in this study it seems necessary for the researcher to investigate the relationship between the self-esteem, autonomy and reading comprehension of EFL learners.

To fulfill the purpose of the study, an attempt was made to find the answer to the following questions:

Q1: Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension?

If a significant relationship is found, the following question will be considered:

Q2: Is there any significant difference between EFL learners' self-esteem and autonomy in predicting reading comprehension?

So the following null hypotheses are generated:

H01: There would be no significant relationship among EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension.

If this hypothesis is rejected, the following null hypothesis will be raised:

H02: There is no significant difference between EFL learners' self-esteem and autonomy in predicting reading comprehension.

Considering these hypotheses, two questionnaires and a PET reading comprehension were administered among 174 undergraduate students of Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch. From among those who received the questionnaires, a number of 148 questionnaires were returned to the researcher, of which 121 were filled out completely, and therefore, could be used for further analysis.

C. Significance of the Study

Discovering the relationship between self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension will encourage those who are involved with language training to use reading materials purposefully and efficiently. If a significant relationship is found between self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension this insight can assist in the development of effective instruction.

D. Limitations

1. The participants of this study were undergraduate students whose age usually ranges between 18 and 25; therefore, the result of the study will not be generalizable to other age groups.

2. The number of male and female subjects in this study was not equal, so gender may act as an intervening variable.

II. THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Introduction

In order to meet the essential requirements of this research, the review of literature will be allocated to the study of the following three general topics: "Self-esteem", "Autonomy", and "Reading comprehension".

B. Definition of Key Terms

Self-Esteem

Seminal works of James became the Theoretical base in the area of self-esteem. According to James (1890), the self is "part of me" that is one's body, abilities, reputation, strengths, weaknesses, and possessions (as cited in Harris, 2009).

Jacoby (1994) maintains, "Self-esteem is a feeling of worth that we have of ourselves. Self-esteem is a kind of belief about a self that a person brings with him or herself when facing the world (Blascovich&Tomaka, 1991).

Cooley (1902) believes that the most dominant aspects of self is social one. The social self creates through one's observations of how others react to the self.

According to Blascovich&Tomaka (1991), self-esteem can be used to evaluate self-concept which is more comprehensive exhibition of self and consists of cognitive and behavioral facets.

Some researchers have suggested that a high level of self-esteem facilitates the achievement of goals (Leary, Adams, Allen, & Hancock, 2007). Pepole with high self-esteem set higher goals for themselves and are more inclined to continue in dealing with failure (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003).

According to Harris (2009), there are different ways for measuring self-esteem. Researchers may measure people's self-esteem by saying, "Tell me about yourself." They may give an open-ended questionnaire with the phrase "Who am I" at the top, followed by a series of blank lines. They might give people a pile of cards, each with a statement or phrase and tell them to sort the statements into a series of piles ranging from "most descriptive' to "least descriptive" of themselves. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI) is one of the most widely used measures of self-esteem (Harris, 2009). It was intended to measure the respondents' viewpoint toward self in personal, social, family, and academic contexts.

Coopersmith (1967, 1981) believed that self-reports expand the perception of individuals' self-esteem.

Among the most recent studies in Iran, the result of the study conducted by Zare and Riasati (2011) indicated that the anxiety and academic level of students were significantly and positively related to the learner self-esteem level of their sample. Koosha, Ketabi&Kassaian (2011) showed that gender has a significant impact on the speaking skill while age does not have a significant impact on this skill. A research conducted by Rashidi, Yamini and Riazi (2009) revealed that introversion did not have an impact on students' level of self-esteem; however, extroversion influenced participants' learner self-esteem. Bagheri and Faghih (2012) found that higher levels of self-esteem in MA students lead to higher levels of reading comprehension and vice versa.

In this study, self-esteem is operationally defined in terms of the participants' scores on the questionnaire designed by Coopersmith (1967) which includes a 58-item self-report inventory that the participants read a declarative statement and choose "like me" or "unlike me" regarding statements.

Autonomy

The seminal work of Holec's (1981), in foreign language learning context, provoked a growing interest regarding learner autonomy concept. He defines learner autonomy as the ability to take responsibility of his or her own learning. And it is the definition that most researchers agree with (Benson &Voller, 1997; Little, 1991, Dickinson, 1995).

Little (1995) believes "autonomy is a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action.

The original theory and practice of autonomy emerged from research on adult self-directed learning (Zhe, 2009), a process in which individuals accept responsibility for all the decisions concerned with their learning.

According to Boud (1995), an autonomous learner is the one who is prepared to take some significant responsibility for his own learning.

Learners who take responsibility for their own learning have higher probability to achieve their learning goals, and to keep a positive attitude regarding learning in the future (Dickinson, 1987).

There is an increasing interest toward the notion of autonomy in the domain of EFL teaching and learning all over the world, especially by Iranian researchers. Among the most recent ones, the result of the study conducted by Nematipour (2012) indicated that visual and auditory learning styles were significantly and positively related to the learner autonomous level of her sample. SheikhiBehdani (2011) showed that Iranian EFL learners' autonomy was significantly related to critical thinking ability. Also, research conducted by Kashefian-32

Naeeni and Riazi (2011) revealed that age did not influenced students' autonomy; however, professional and marital status had impact on learner autonomy.

In this study, learner autonomy is operationally defined in terms of the obtained scores by participants on the questionnaire designed by Zhang and Li (2004, p. 23) which consists of 21 items. Participants have to answer each item on a five-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=occasionally, 4=often, 5=always).

Reading Comprehension

According to Eskey (2002), reading comprehension is "a process of eliciting information from a printed text and relating it to your background knowledge for constructing meaning" (p. 6).

Reading comprehension is operationally defined in this study in terms of the participants' obtained score on a test excerpted from the Cambridge site. The test contains 5 parts and a total number of 35 questions.

In order to accomplish the purpose of the study, the following three instruments were utilized:

Over the past decade, a number of Iranian researchers tried to probe the learners' level of comprehension and ways to attain higher levels through different studies. Kafipour and HosseiniNaveh (2010) indicated that vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies contributed to the learner reading comprehension level. Memari (2000) examined the effect of skimming on the reading speed and comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. The result indicated students should be conscious of the strategies needed for improving their comprehension. Also, Shakeri's study (2012) showed that learners' use of reading strategies and their level of reading comprehension have a significant relationship with each other. It also proved that higher levels of autonomy will result in higher levels of reading comprehension.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

In an attempt to investigate the relationship among EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension, a detailed description of participants, instrumentation, procedure, design, and statistical analysis of the study would be of use.

B. Participants

The number of the participants in this research were 121 male and female EFL learners, between the ages of 18 to 25. They were selected randomly and consisted of undergraduates majoring in English Translation and English Literature at Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch.

C. Instruments

Coopersmith Self-esteem Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains 58 items. For each item, participants answer whether the statement provided is "like me" or "not like me". If participants answer "like me" for item number 2, 4, 5, 11, 14, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 28, 29, 32, 36, 45, and 57 they are given one mark, and if they choose "not like me" they are given no mark. Item number 6, 13, 20, 24, 27, 34, 47, and 55 are known as lie items. If a participants select the choice of "like me" for 3 or more times, it means that they want to present themselves in a positive light. These participants should be excluded of the research. The rest of the items are marked in reverse order; which means if participants answer with "like me" they are given no mark and if they answer with "not like me" they are given one mark. The standard time allocated to this test is 30 minutes, but for this research, the participants answered it in 15 minutes. Scores between 25 and 50 are associated with high self-esteem while lower scores show low self-esteem. Coopersmith (1967) reported a desirable value reliability of 0.88 for the test (Kohansal, 1995). Acceptable reliability (internal consistency and test-retest) and validity (convergent and discriminate) information exists for the CSEI (Bolton, 2003).

Autonomy Questionnaire

In order to measure the degree of participants' autonomy in learning, the researcher utilized the questionnaire designed by Zhang and Li (2004, p. 23) which includes 21 items. Participants had to answer each item on a five-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=occasionally, 4=often, 5=always).The questionnaire has proved to have high content validity and high reliability. The questions were divided by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Wenden (1998, p. 34-35), and Oxford (1990, p. 17). The standard time allocated to this test is 40 minutes, but participants answered it in 15 minutes. In order to turn the participants' selected choices into scores, the choices A, B, C, D and E are marked one, two, three, four and five, respectively. The total score turned out to be 105.

PET Reading Comprehension Test

A PET reading comprehension test derived from the Cambridge site and published in 2010 to measure the reading comprehension of participants. The reading component consists of 35 questions with five separate reading tasks in all. Each of the 35 questions carries one mark, which comprises 25% of the total marks for the whole examination. Texts are authentic and adapted to the level of the PET examination (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

D. Procedure

In order to achieve the purpose of the research, the following procedure was carried out:

Before administrating the questionnaires, the process of completing the questionnaires was fully explained to the participants. Due to the nature of correlational study, no criterion for establishing homogeneity was adopted. Additionally, the researcher selected the students randomly. Thence, the three questionnaires were administered to 174 participants. The researcher observed the process to make sure participants had fully understood the explanations and were able to answer the questions.

It should be added that administering each of the above-mentioned questionnaires took 40 minutes of each 90-minute class and three sessions were required, each for one questionnaire.

From the initial 174 administered questionnaires, 148 sets of questionnaires, including answered for all the three questionnaires and were considered for statistical analyses regarding the relationship among the variables.

To encourage participants to answer the questionnaires, the researcher promised to send the results to their email addresses. Participants were required to hand in the questionnaires right after finishing them because the researcher could not reach them later.

In the first session, the researcher handed out the self-esteem questionnaire, in the second session the autonomy questionnaire, and in the final session the PET exam was administered. The final step was conducting the statistical procedures by the researcher to see whether or not there was any relationship among EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension.

E. Design

The design of this study is descriptive since the focus of the researcher is to describe and interpret the current status of phenomena. Correlational research describes the degree to which two or more quantitative variables are related. In other words, the researcher aimed at identifying the quality and quantity of the relationship between the two or more variables rather than establishing a cause and effect relationship. Therefore, the design of the current study is an ex post facto one. The Spearman correlation was used in order to find the correlations.

IV. Results

For testing the null hypotheses, the descriptive statistics were used and the assumptions of linear correlation were checked, the results are presented in the following sections.

To check correlation, these assumptions (normality of distribution of variables, linear relation between each pair, and homoscedasticity of regression) should be checked.

To test the linearity of relations, the researcher had to visually examine the data by designing scatterplots. Since there were multiple variables, the researcher designed a multiple scatterplot for self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension which is presented in Figure 4.1.
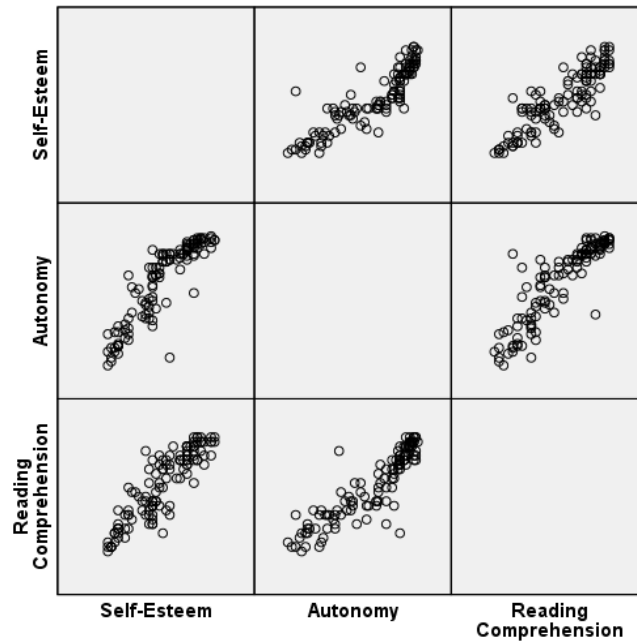
Figure 1. Multiple Scatterplot of Self-Esteem, Autonomy and Reading Comprehension

The inspection of Figure 1 shows that there was no kind of non-linear relationship, such as a U- shaped or curvilinear distribution, between the scores on self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension. It was therefore, relevant to test linear relationship in the data by running a correlation. Descriptive statistics of the data were obtained in order to check the normality of the distributions. They are mentioned thoroughly in the next three sections.

TABLE 1.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE SCORE ON THE SELF-ESTEEM QUESTIONNAIRE

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Self-Esteem	121	31	16	47	31.98	.784	8.622	74.333	-.180	.220	-1.014	.437

The fraction of skewness on Standard error of skewness for self-esteem (-.180/.220= -.81) was within the acceptable range of ±1.96.
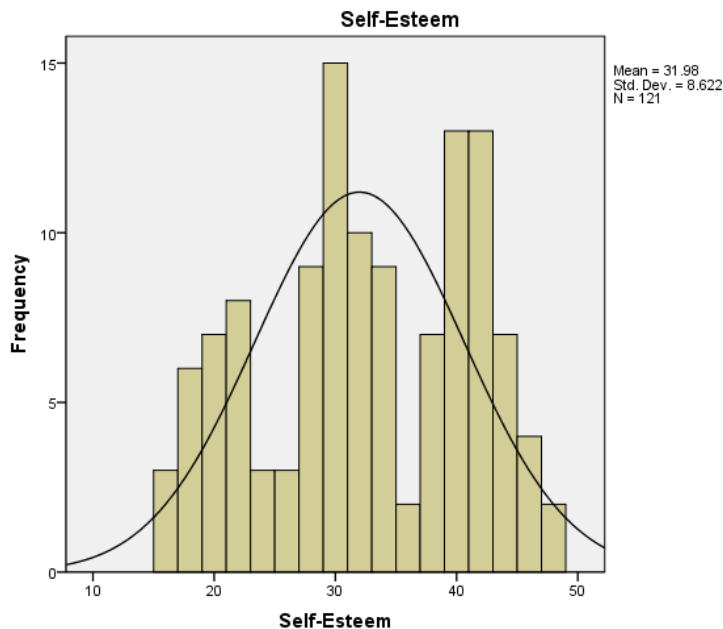

Figure 2. Histogram of the Distribution of Scores from the Self-Esteem Questionnaire

As illustrated, scores appear to be reasonably normally distributed.

Descriptive Statistics of the Autonomy Scores

The descriptive statistics related to the obtained scores on the instrument appear below in table 4.2.

TABLE 2.
THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE OBTAINED SCORES ON THE INSTRUMENT

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Autonomy	121	66	22	88	65.24	1.773	380.167	74.333	-.690	.220	-.909	.437

The fraction of skewness on Standard error of skewness for autonomy (-.690/.220= -.81) was not within the acceptable range of ±1.96. This means that the distribution showed a significant deviation from normality; therefore, parametric correlation could not be run on the participants' scores obtained from the autonomy questionnaire. The researcher conducted a Spearman correlation.
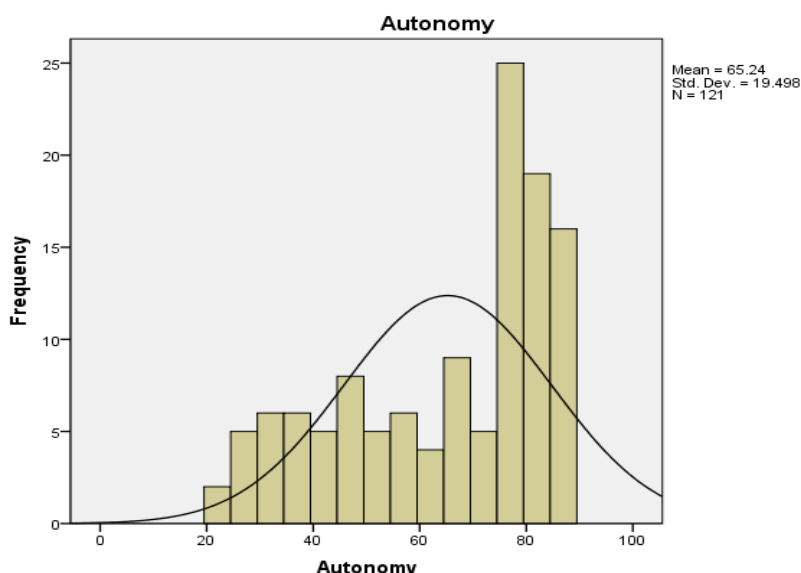

Figure 3. Histogram of the Distribution of Scores from the Autonomy Question

The actual shape of the distribution for autonomy can be seen in Figure 3 As illustrated, scores do not appear to be reasonably normally distributed.

Descriptive Statistics of the Reading Comprehension Scores

The PET reading comprehension test was the last instrument which was used to collect the required data for the dependent variable of the study. The descriptive statistics related to the obtained scores of the test appear below in Table 4.6.

TABLE 3.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE SCORES ON THE READING COMPREHENSION TEST

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Reading Comprehension	121	25	8	33	22.70	.627	7.388	54.577	-.298	.220	-1.228	.437

As appeared in table 3 the distribution of data for reading comprehension turned out to be normal as the fraction of skewness on standard error of skewness (-.298/.220= -1.35) was within the range of ±1.96. It suggests that the distribution did not show a significant deviation from normality; therefore, parametric correlation could be run on the participants' scores obtained from the Reading Comprehension Test.
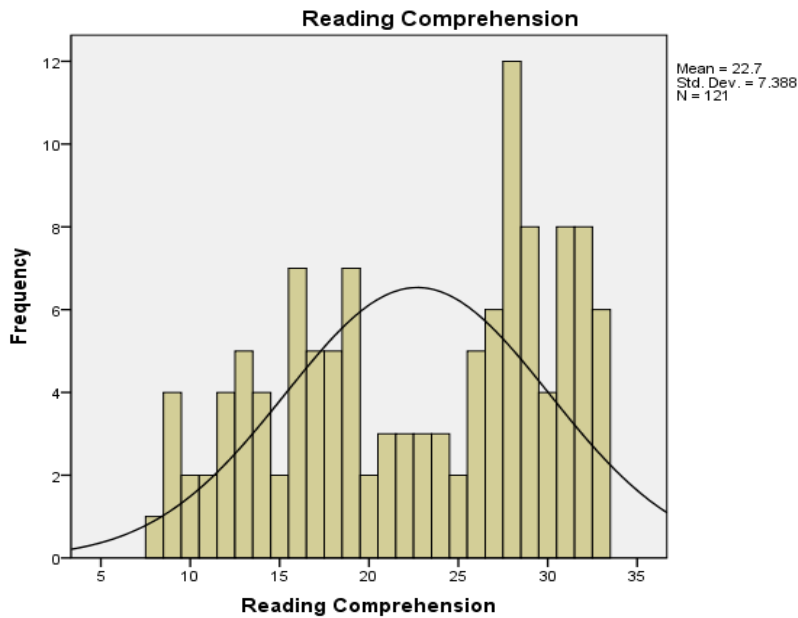
Figure 4. Histogram of the Distribution of Scores from the Reading Comprehension Test

The actual shape of the distribution for reading comprehension can be seen in figure 4 As illustrated, scores appear to be reasonably normally distributed.

Homoscedasticity for Regression

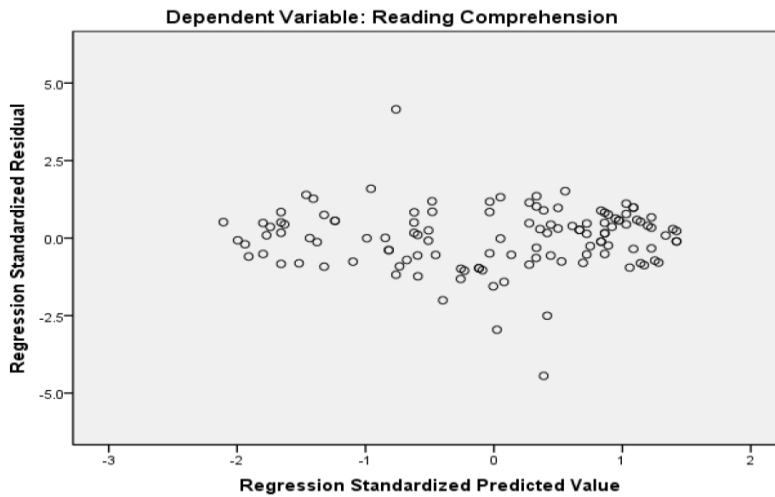In order to examine the homoscedasticity, the researcher checked the residual plot.

Figure 5. Plot of Studentized Residuals for Reading Comprehension

As demonstrated by Figure 5, the cloud of data is scattered randomly across the plot and hence the variance is homogeneous. considering the assumption of normality correlation was not detected for autonomy, the researcher ran Spearmans' correlation. This will verify the hypotheses of the research which will be presented in the succeeding sections.

A. Testing the First Null Hypotheses

In order to test the first null hypothesis of the study the researcher had to conduct a Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis based on the ex post facto design. Since the assumption of normality of the distributions was violated, the researcher had to apply a non-parametric statistical analysis to examine the research hypotheses. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was employed as the non-parametric counterpart to Pearson's Product Correlation to calculate the relationship between the variables. Table 4.4 shows the results of Spearman's correlation.

TABLE 4.
CORRELATION OF THE OBTAINED SCORES ON THE QUESTIONNAIRES

	Self-Esteem	Autonomy	Reading comprehension
Spearman's Self-Esteem Correlation Coefficient rhoSig. (2-tailed) N	1.000 . 121	.919 .000 121	.880 .000 121
AutonomyCorrelation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.919 .000 121	1.000 . 121	.911 .000 121
Reading Comprehension Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.888 .000 121	.911 .000 121	1.000 . 121

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As demonstrated in table 4, the correlation between self-esteem and autonomy came out to be significant at .05 level (r=.919, p=.000<.05). Also self-esteem showed a significant correlation with reading comprehension as well (r=.88, p=.000<.05). Autonomy and reading comprehension were also significantly correlated (r=.91, p=.000<.05).

TABLE 5.
CORRELATION REPORT

No of cases	R	Sig(2-tailed)	R2
121	.919	.000	.84
121	.88	.000	.77
121	.911	.000	.82

According to Table 5, the R2 (the effect size for correlation) became .84 for self-esteem and autonomy, .77 for self-esteem and reading comprehension, and .82 for autonomy and reading comprehension. As the results of the correlational study manifested, the researcher was able to reject the first null hypothesis which stated that:

H01: There is no significant relationship among EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy and reading comprehension.

B. Testing the Second Null Hypothesis

Since the correlation between the three variables of self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension were significant, the researcher ran the multiple regression analysis among variables and to test the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between EFL learners' self-esteem and autonomy, as predictor variables of this study, in predicting their reading comprehension. The following tables show the result:

Table 6 shows the variables of the regression model. Self-esteem and autonomy were the predictor (independent) variables and reading comprehension was the predicted (dependent) variable.

TABLE 6.
VARIABLES OF THE REGRESSION MODEL

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Autonomy, Self-Esteem		Enter

a. All requested variables entered.
b. Dependent Variable: Reading Comprehension
Table 4.3.2 Presents the regression model summary including the R and R square.

TABLE 7.
MODEL SUMMARY-R AND R SQUARE

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.915	.838	.835	2.998

a. Predictors: (Constant), Autonomy, Self-Esteem
b. Dependent Variable: Reading Comprehension

As demonstrated in Table 4.8., R turned out to be .91 and R square end up to be 0.838. This indicate that 83.8 percent of the variance in reading comprehension, can be explained by this model. Table 8 shows the results of ANOVA (F2, 118 = 305.31, p=.000<.05) which established to be significant.

TABLE 8.
REGRESSION OUTPUT: ANOVA TABLE

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5488.631	2	2744.315	305.310	.000
	Residual	1060.659	118	8.989		
	Total	6549.289	120			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Autonomy, Self-Esteem
b. Dependent Variable: Reading Comprehension

Table 8 demonstrates the standardized beta coefficients. The examination of the Sig. values demonstrated that both self-esteem and autonomy contributed significantly to the equation as both Sig. values are less than .05. The comparison of beta values demonstrated that autonomy has the largest beta coefficient (Beta=.501, t=6.19, p=.000). It indicates that autonomy has the strongest statistically significant contribution to reading comprehension. As a result, one could come to this end that autonomy more significantly predict the reading comprehension scores of candidates. Moreover, inspection of part correlation (semi partial correlation coefficient) revealed that autonomy uniquely explains 6 percent of the variance in reading comprehension (.230×.230= 0.052).

TABLE 9.
REGRESSION OUTPUT: COEFFICIENT

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		standardized Coefficients	T	Sig	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1(Constant)	1.76	1.052		-1.676	.096	-3.846	.320					
Self-Esteem	.378	.069	0441	5.446	.000	.240	.515	.886	.448	.202	.210	4.767
Autonomy	.190	.031	.501	6.197	.000	.129	.251	.893	.496	.230	.210	4.767

a. Dependent Variable: Reading Comprehension

Although in the previous section, the normality of the distributions were examined for correlation, the residuals table (Table 10) proved the absence of outliers as Mahalanobis distance value exceeded 13.82 and the Cook's distance values did not surpassed 1(Tabachnick&Fidell, 2007).

TABLE 10.
RESIDUAL STATISTICS - PREDICTED VARIABLE: READING COMPREHENSION RESIDUALS STATISTICS

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	8.46	32.32	22.70	6.763	121
Std. Predicted Value	-2.107	1.422	.000	1.000	121
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.297	1.356	.452	.136	121
Adjusted Predicted Value	8.37	32.33	22.70	6.766	121
Residual	-13.322	12.453	.000	2.973	121
Std. Residual	-4.444	4.154	.000	.992	121
Stud. Residual	-4.507	4.188	.000	1.003	121
Deleted Residual	-13.706	12.662	.001	3.041	121
Stud. Deleted Residual	-4.932	4.520	-.002	1.036	121
Mahal. Distance	.183	23.560	1.983	2.464	121
Cook's Distance	.000	.195	.008	.021	121
Centered Leverage Value	.002	.196	.017	.021	121

Therefore, the researcher was able to refuse the second null hypothesis that stated: "There is no significant difference between EFL learners' self-esteem and autonomy in predicting their reading comprehension." On one hand, a significant correlation was found between the participants' self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension, and on the other hand, the regression analysis model demonstrated that autonomy was the strongest significant predictor of reading comprehension.

C. Discussion

The analysis of data reported in this chapter yielded that there was a significant relationship among the three variables. The results of the regression analyses also revealed that self-esteem and autonomy were predictors for reading comprehension. However, it was revealed that autonomy makes the strongest statistically significant unique contribution to explaining reading comprehension. Put simplistically, autonomy is a better predictor of reading comprehension.

The findings of this study are in line with Zarei and Ghahremani's findings (2010) about the relationship between autonomy and reading comprehension. Other studies on self-esteem's relationship with reading comprehension also imply the positive relationship of these two variables. In one study by Bagheri and Faghih (2012), they found that a higher self-esteem will result in higher reading comprehension and vice versa. The above-mentioned premises support the findings of the present study in that they show both self-esteem and autonomy significantly contribute to reading comprehension.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The current research aimed at investigating any possible relationship among EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy and reading comprehension. It also aimed at seeking any difference between EFL learners' self-esteem and autonomy in predicting their reading comprehension. Rejecting the first null hypothesis of the study, the researcher concluded that

there was a significant correlation among EFL learners' self-esteem, autonomy, and reading comprehension. The results of the regression analysis indicated that learners' self-esteem and autonomy could significantly predict their reading comprehension. However, autonomy could be a better predictor of reading comprehension as compared with self-esteem. Therefore, the conclusion was that there was a significant difference between learners' self-esteem and autonomy in predicting their reading comprehension.

The findings imply that the students' reading comprehension can be improved by fostering the students' autonomy in the classroom. It is also inferred that the more autonomous a learner becomes, the more likely he is to achieve reading comprehension.

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