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# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GRADE 7 STUDENTS' ENGLISH READING AND WRITING SELF-EFFICACY FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACCORDING TO THEIR ACADEMIC PROGRAM AT SAINT DOMINIC SCHOOL, BANGKOK

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to determine the level of English reading and English writing self-efficacy for learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students according to their Academic Program at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok. There were 181 students studying English as a foreign language, consisting of 53 students from Academic Program 1, 64 students from Academic Program 2, 32 students from Academic Program 3, and 32 students from Academic Program 4, in Grade 7 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, in the academic year 2018. This study followed a quantitative research methodology employing a questionnaire developed by Henk and Melnick (1992, 1996) composing of two parts: the Reader Self-Perception Scale used to address the level of English reading self-efficacy, and the Writer Self-Perception Scale used to address the level of English writing self-efficacy. There were three main elements included in the study: the level of English reading self-efficacy, the level of English writing self-efficacy, and the difference among Academic Program. In this study, the self-efficacy focused on English reading and English writing for learning English as a foreign language. The study found that Grade 7 students among Academic Program had high level of English reading self-efficacy, and average level of English writing self-efficacy. Furthermore, there was a significant difference both in English reading and in English writing self-efficacy among Academic Program. The study concludes with recommendations for practice and for future research.

## Introduction
Bandura provides the concept of self-efficacy of social cognitive theory for motivation of learning that self-efficacy plays a major part in determining

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individuals' chances for success and producing a favorable outcome as it can influence individuals to perform given task differently. According to Bandura (1977, 1978, 2006), self-efficacy is to representing individuals' judgment of capability or what they can do.

In learning a foreign language, many language learners believe that listening and speaking skills are the most difficult to accomplish due to the fact that they involved the ear factor; however, difficulty in learning a foreign language is not just about creating and forming ideas, in fact it as well includes translating these ideas into comprehensible and written messages. Additionally, developing reading and writing skills are more complex not only because of its process but as well as these are learned skills compare to listening and speaking skills which are acquired naturally. Connection to that, foreign language learners have to pay high attention to all levels of reading and writing skills since they involve spelling, punctuation, word choice, grammar and can use various structures which are prone to error due to the fact that they are more of individual effort (Sahin, 2016). Altogether, this indicates that reading and writing skills are highly challenging and become discouraging which considered to be the most problematic skills for learners to be professional in learning a foreign language. Hence, when foreign language learners have weak language proficiency (Axelsson, 2007).

Overall, the reading and writing self-efficacy in learning English can be defined as judgment that individuals have toward their own abilities in successful performing regards to reading and writing skills suitable to their academic levels. Most studies often focus on the relationship of writing or reading self-efficacy with other factors such as achievement, goal orientation, or language learning (Chea & Shumow, 2014; Genc, 2016; Tanyer, 2015). Thus, this leads to set the research with the objectives aiming to investigate reading and writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students among different Academic Programs.

**Objectives**

There are four main research objectives:

1. To identify the level of English reading self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok.
2. To identify the level of English writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok.
3. To determine if there is a significant difference in English reading self-efficacy among Academic Programs 1, 2, 3, and 4 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok.

4. To determine if there is a significant difference in English writing self-efficacy among Academic Programs 1, 2, 3, and 4 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok.

## Literature Review

*The role of English language in educational context*

At the beginning of the 21st century, English was used in almost every country in the world. Therefore, some say that English could also be called a global language (Sharifian, 2009). According to Crystal (2003), a language would become a global language when a majority of people of countries speak it as a mother tongue, as well as being used as by other countries. In other words, global languages are languages that can be spoken as either first, second, or foreign language. In addition, a prominent characteristic of global languages is that it is a language which used widely in many places around the world and people feel the need to master it for their life.

On one hand, Kachru (1992) clarify the role of English language by dividing countries into three circles of English language: inner circle, outer or extended circle, and expanding circle. Firstly, the inner circle countries use English as their first language such as Great Britain, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Secondly, the outer circle countries are non-native speakers who adopt English as a tool of communication. Thirdly, the expanding circle countries such as Jordan, China, Japan, and many others view English to have no given a special role in communication, nor in any administrative status.

Consequently, Thailand is basically categorized in the expanding circle country since English is utilized as a foreign language of the country. Nevertheless, English is used as an official foreign language as imposed by Thai language education policies in Thailand. Moreover, English is known to be a compulsory subject in schools and universities (Baker, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2010).

*English Language Policies and Education in Thailand*

The language policies in Thailand dictate that the only official language is Thai which is considered to be the national language used for communication throughout all levels of this country. According to the National Commission in 1978, languages in Thailand are categorized into four aspects as follows: 1) the national language, 2) foreign languages, 3) regional or provincial languages, and 4) minority languages used in a certain group of (Office of the Education Council, 2009).

In relation to that, English is officially classified to have an equal status with any other foreign language in Thailand. That was, Chinese, Japanese, French, or German (Ministry of Education, 2006, 2008). Generally, the use of the English language rises its importance in Thai society socially and academically. In terms of social aspect, English has involved in several daily activities such as entertainment, communication, and having contact internationally, while in terms of academic aspect English is used as the language of instruction in various international organizations from lower up to higher education.

The goal of the Basic Education Core Curriculum in Thailand is to attain the national harmony, learning principles, and goals by acquiring knowledge and skills; to promote ability to use the language confidently with morality; and to serve as a basis for Thai-ness and universal values. In addition, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in 2008 expects Grade 7 students to enhance English competence, in order to do so the students should be exposed to cultural issues and intercultural communication in order to develop confidence and curiosity in real situations, as well as to prepare them for higher level education (OBEC, 2008; MOE, 2006). As the matter of fact, upon graduating, it is expected that Grade 7 Thai students would be equipped with sufficient English competences and enable to use the language confidently in real-life situations.

*Social cognitive theory for motivation of learning*
Social cognitive theory of Bandura (1977) gives emphasis on the idea that learning is the outcome of interrelationship between cognitive factors, environmental factors, and behavior factors. Furthermore, based on the theory, it views learners to be proactive, self-reflecting meaning they have their systems of self-belief that allow them to produce a desire outcome (Rutherford-Hemming, 2012). As a result, this self-belief helps the learners to make decision, examine their own behavior, and enhance beliefs about their abilities. Nonetheless, it is due to the concept of self-efficacy that helped to explain the reason on different people with similar levels of achievement or skills perform different behaviors.

*Self-efficacy*
Self-efficacy is the concepts under social cognitive of motivation for learning theory (SCT) of Bandura. Social cognitive theory is understood as a psychological model of behavior that developed to explain on how environmental factors namely family, peers, and teachers, have impact to decision making of individuals to present their behaviors and learn in a certain way (Lee & Johnson-Reid, 2016). In another word, self-efficacy primarily

defines as specific self-judgments and beliefs that people have towards their abilities in performing or finishing a task. Moreover, Walker (2003) stated that self-efficacy beliefs are task specific in which the performing depends on the objectives that are planned by learners within specific conditions; furthermore, it is also influenced by interest, value, function, and affective responses.

The theory claims that having self-belief system could encourage the learners to control their own thoughts, feelings, or motivations. Moreover, it explains that through self-reflection then the learners would change their thoughts and consequently result to a change in behavior. Connection to that, self-efficacy refers to an internal belief the learners have towards their own capabilities to complete a specific task successfully.

*English reading self-efficacy*
Reading is an active activity to understand information in which students should be mastered this receptive skill since it can affect success in their academic achievement; therefore, reading is a significant skill in learning (Hager, 2017; Ningsih, 2014). In addition, reading is considered to be one of the language skills in learning a foreign language process that found to be difficult as the matter of fact that this problem is caused by the lack of self-efficacy in reading, hence in order to improve reading ability; it is noted to understand the effect and importance of self-efficacy toward reading. Nes Ferrara (2005) further mentioned that reading self-efficacy is a key element for a change of being acceptable or excellent level reader. In addition, Henk and Melnick (1992, 1996) stated that reading self-efficacy is students perceive themselves as a good reader. For the purpose of being a good reader, it is essential to employ the efficacy beliefs one has about reading; however, it is also necessary to note that the efficacy beliefs also depends on task difficulties (Piercey, 2013).

*English writing self-efficacy*
Among the four macro skills in English, reading and writing are learned skills which cannot learn naturally compare to listening and speaking. Moreover, among the four skills, writing is mentioned to be the most unfavorable skill for students to learn since they consider writing English as a foreign language to be an exhausted process (Rahmat, 2017; Riswanto, 2016). Nevertheless, it is reported that those who have obstacles in writing often develop negative thoughts on writing. Al-Khasawheh (2010) stated that having negative thoughts on writing can be influenced by the way writer have perception on writing.

Self-efficacy in writing can be defined as a belief students have regarding their ability to accomplish a writing task successfully. Moreover, Henk and Meknick (1992, 1996) mentioned a definition of writing self-efficacy in their studies as how students perceive themselves as writers and the way they appraise themselves. Based on Hashemnejad, Zoghi, and Amini (2014), students who consider themselves to be a poor writer often present themselves with unwilling involve in a writing task or incomplete task in contrast with the students who judge themselves as a good writer often complete a task with a high standard. Khojasteh (2016) mentioned that those who have self-belief or have confidence in writing may assert and face difficulties with long endeavor in completing a task more.

**Methodology**
*Population and sample*
This research was conducted in Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, a private school in Thailand. It was a quantitative comparative study which used a research questionnaire to determine the level of English reading and writing self-efficacy and investigate if there were significant difference among Academic Program for learning English as a foreign language. The population sample was Grade 7 of all Academic Programs offering in the school. 181 students consisted of 53 students in Academic Program 1, 64 students in Academic Program 2, 32 students in Academic Program 3, and 32 students in Academic Program 4 of academic year 2018.

*Instrument*
The questionnaire of the study has two parts, such as English reading self-efficacy and English writing self-efficacy. The English reading self-efficacy was addressed by employing the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) of 32 items, and English writing self-efficacy was addressed by employing the Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS) of 37 items.

Henk and Melnick (1992), developed the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) and it has been validated and used as a tool for research into the self-efficacy aspect. Before its official recognition, the RSPS was piloted with 625 students from different school districts from grades four to six in Arkansas, Connecticut, and North Carolina. Regarding to the Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS), it was piloted with 964 students at grades four to six from three schools in south central Pennsylvania, the United States. Table 1 shows the number of items and the alpha coefficients reported by Henk and Melnick (1992, 1996) and the current study.

Table 1: *Reliability Statistics of Reading Self-Efficacy and Writing Self-Efficacy*

| Categories | Number of items | Alpha reliability (Henk & Melnick, 1992, 1996) | Current study |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reading Self-efficacy | 32 | .84 | . 96 |
| Writing Self-Efficacy | 37 | .84 | .97 |
| Total | 69 | | |

A 5-point Likert scale used to find the students' English reading self-efficacy and English writing self-efficacy score. Table 2 shows Level of Agreement, Scores, and Scales of English Reading and Writing Self-Efficacy.

Table 2: *Level of Agreement, Scores, and Scales of English Reading and Writing Self-Efficacy*

| Frequency level | Score | Scale | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 5 | 4.51-5.00 | The level of student self-efficacy is very high |
| Agree | 4 | 3.51- 4.50 | The level of student self-efficacy is high. |
| Undecided | 3 | 2.51-3.50 | The level of student self-efficacy is average. |
| Disagree | 2 | 1.51-2.50 | The level of student self-efficacy is low. |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 1.00-1.50 | The level of student self-efficacy is very low. |

*Collection of data*
The questionnaire was carried out in November, 2018, in Bangkok, Thailand. In order to facilitate the proper completion of data collection, the researcher co-operated with the School Director, the head of Academic Affairs, the Head of Foreign Languages Department, Grade 7 Thai English teacher in arranging classes and collecting the questionnaires. The questionnaires were 100% returned from the total of 181 questionnaires.

*Data analysis*
Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the collected data by using a statistical software program. The statistical methods were applied to each of the research objectives as follows; Objective (1) Mean and standard deviations were used to identify the level of Grade 7 students' English reading self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language, Objective (2) Mean and standard deviations were used to identify the level of Grade 7 students' English writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language, Objective (3) one-way ANOVA were used to determine if there is a significant difference in English reading self-efficacy among Academic Programs. If the one-way ANOVA test revealed a significant difference ($p < .05$), then a Scheffé post-hoc multiple comparison test would be performed in order to determine which Academic Programs are significantly different from each other, Objective (4) one-way ANOVA were used to determine if there is a

significant difference in English writing self-efficacy among Academic Programs. If the one-way ANOVA test revealed a significant difference ($p < .05$), then a Scheffé post-hoc multiple comparison test would be performed.

**Findings**
There were four main findings based on the research objectives.

*Research finding 1*
1.  The level of English reading self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was high.
    1.1. The level of English reading self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students in Academic Program 1 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was high.
    1.2. The level of English reading self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students in Academic Program 2 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was high.
    1.3. The level of English reading self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students in Academic Program 3 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was average.
    1.4. The level of English reading self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students in Academic Program 4 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was average.

*Research finding 2*
2.  The level of English writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was average.
    2.1. The level of English writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students in Academic Program 1 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was high.
    2.2. The level of English writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students in Academic Program 2 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was high.
    2.3. The level of English writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students in Academic Program 3 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was average.
    2.4. The level of English writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language of Grade 7 students in Academic Program 4 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok, was average.

*Research finding 3*
3.  There was a significant difference in English reading self-efficacy among Academic Programs 1, 2, 3, and 4 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok.

*Research finding 4*
4.  There was a significant difference in English writing self-efficacy among Academic Programs 1, 2, 3, and 4 at Saint Dominic School, Bangkok.

**Discussion**
*Academic Programs and English Reading Self-Efficacy*
According to Henk and Melnick (1992), an individual who chooses to read a book at moderate level of difficulty then succeeds likely want to try reading similar level book or challenge oneself with comparable one. In this study, the Grade 7 students in Academic Program 1 which focus on intensive mathematics and intensive science, Academic Program 2 which focus on intensive mathematics, intensive science and basic engineer, Academic Program 3 which focus on Chinese and additional English, and Academic Program 4 which focus on leadership development and additional English, presented to have high level of reading self-efficacy in general. As a result, the findings of the overall showed a sense of positive self-efficacy in reading of Grade 7 students in learning English as a foreign language. Connection to that, the researcher assumes that the Grade 7 students perceived themselves as a good reader mentioned by Henk and Melnick (1992) that the Reader Self-Perception Scale instrument is developed based on the theory of Albert Bandura (1977) that self-efficacy is judgments of a person regarding his or her own ability to perform a task in which this perception also has an impact to future activities.

Furthermore, this is encouraging because, in fact, Grade 7 students from Academic Programs 1 and 2 revealed to have high level of English reading self-efficacy without enrolling in additional English, in contrast to the students from Academic Programs 3 and 4 who enroll in additional English yet presented to have average level of English reading self-efficacy. Therefore, encountering many challenges in learning, the individual with a low self-efficacy normally avoids challenging scenarios and has a weak expectation.

In relation to that, the Scheffé post-hoc multiple comparison test of Grade 7 students is performed to identify the differentiating Academic Programs which there is a significant different and found that Grade 7 students who study additional English with the students who do not study additional English disclosed to have a significant difference to one another. For example, Grade 7 students in Academic Programs 1 and 2 have studied quite similar subjects

such as intensive mathematics and science which is contrast to Academic Programs 3 and 4 which are more on additional foreign languages and self-development. Notably, between Academic Programs 1 and 2 also found to have no significant difference between them as same as between Academic Programs 3 and 4. Therefore, the researcher postulates that English reading self-efficacy is different among the mentioned Academic Programs due to subject requirement or interests of students.

This can be implied that the subject requirement in each Academic Program might be one of the reasons that influence students to evaluate English reading task differently. Connection to that, since students independently choose their own Academic Program, consequently it might relate to how individual perceives own ability and willing to complete the task successfully as well (Latham & Pinder, 2005).

Another reason might be due to the fact that they have motivation to complete a task such as gaining compliments, developing confidence and so on, as supported by Conway (2017) and Hadomi (2012) that students tend to challenge themselves when they are motivated to complete a specific task. In relation to Academic Programs and English reading self-efficacy, the researcher assumes that taking different academic program cannot make a conclusion one Academic Program is greater than the others, it is depended on how each student perceive and give effort of their ability to achieve the setting goal. In summary, the student who achieves low grade in English reading can evaluate her/him as a good reader depending on the way s/he appraises her/himself (Henk & Melnick, 1992). Additionally, Piercey (2013) mentioned that in order to become a good reader, it is necessary to employ the positive belief about reading task.

*Academic Programs and English Writing Self-Efficacy*
Academic writing often requires high thinking process in terms of content, organization, structure, grammar, and the likes, not to mentioned that writing is considered to be a productive skill in which many students encounter lots of obstacles (Erkan & Saban, 2011); therefore, it is not surprising that students would avoid writing task and develop to have low writing self-efficacy, especially when it comes to involve foreign language learning such as English. As for English writing self-efficacy, the present study revealed that the Grade 7 students have an average level of writing self-efficacy in learning English as a foreign language at the overall score. Therefore, it can be said that the Grade 7 students of each Academic Program are facing with English writing difficulty, yet they can still handle. As for English writing of Academic Programs 1 and 2 disclosed to attain high level while Academic Programs 3

and 4 found to have average level of English writing self-efficacy. It is important to take note that these students performed the 2017 Cambridge test and results disclosed to have low score in writing skill, yet they evaluate themselves to have average up to high level of English writing self-efficacy which seem to be the opposite direction comparing the results from the Cambridge in 2017 and the results of this study.

This seems that Grade 7 students with similar subject requirement in Academic Programs revealed to have the same level of English writing self-efficacy such as the results of Academic Programs 1 and 2 which were high, and the results between Academic Programs 3 and 4 which were average. This gives a new perspective to the researcher that these students might evaluate themselves basically based on the subject requirement. For example, those who take intensive mathematics and science evaluate themselves with similar results, while those who do not take intensive mathematics and science also obtain the same level of writing self-efficacy. Furthermore, one of the reasons of having low self-efficacy in English writing skill might due to fear of negative comments, insufficient English writing skill and time constraints which were found to be a cause of having low English writing self-efficacy in the study of Ho in 2016. In addition, the study also undertook to determine significant difference in which the results indicated to be a significant difference. It is speculated that English writing self-efficacy may have been lowered by the fact that the students focus on different aspects of writing, for example, the students from Academic Program that give emphasis on learning intensive mathematics as a skill to complete their task but not what they have to pay attention to (Rahmat, 2017). Furthermore, this can be implied that the focus of the Academic Program might determine how students in each program actually perceive their writing ability, supported by Al-Khasawheh (2010) that thoughts on writing can be influenced by the way writer have perception on it. At the end, the researcher concludes that the degree of English writing self-efficacy of Grade 7 students was related to the way they perceive Academic Program.

**Recommendations**
*Recommendations for Teachers*
It is recommended for English language teachers to be aware of the factors that contribute the students' confidence such as self-efficacy. It is strongly recommended for the teachers to prepare the educational process carefully so that the students can gain confidence and not feel afraid to learn English by providing interactive activities as well as opportunities which allow students to apply English skills in daily life, not only focusing on test and grammar orientation since students perceive themselves in terms of English reading and

writing are differently. Furthermore, it is advised the teachers to delve into their own language teaching innovation or maximize the quality of teaching in order to enhance self-efficacy of students.

*Recommendations for Future Researchers*
It is suggested for future researchers to consider adopting qualitative research methods like observation and multi interviews to investigate the self-efficacy in multi-faced aspects as well as the teaching and learning of English. Furthermore, considering achievement of each academic program would provide deeper findings to understand the significance of self-efficacy. Knowing how self-efficacy are formed and what facts affect the self-efficacy of students could prevent having negative self-efficacy in learning a new language. It is also worthy for the future researchers to conduct the study by looking into how school level education in English plays an important role in building self-efficacy of students towards learning English. Lastly, it is recommended to find out the self-efficacy of students towards English language policies in order to know if they are aware about the goals of the government.

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