
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Relationships Between Students' Perceptions of Teacher Enthusiasm and EFL Reading Task Engagement: The Mediating Role of Reading Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm and EFL reading task engagement. Reading self-efficacy was used as a mediating variable. Participants were 74 Saudi male EFL undergraduate students enrolled in a Reading and Building Vocabulary course at Qassim University. Students completed several course-related tasks, including answering pre-reading questions on Blackboard before class, preparing vocabulary items for weekly quizzes, participating in classroom discussions, and completing delayed post-reading quizzes. The study used a correlational design to examine the relationship. Data were collected through questionnaire measures of perceived teacher enthusiasm, reading self-efficacy, and reading task engagement. The results showed that students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm were positively associated with reading self-efficacy ($\beta = .46, p < .001$) and reading task engagement ($\beta = .31, p = .004$). Reading self-efficacy was also a significant positive predictor of reading task engagement ($\beta = .42, p < .001$). Mediation analysis indicated that reading self-efficacy significantly mediated the relationship between teacher enthusiasm and reading task engagement, with a significant indirect effect ($\beta = .19, 95\% \text{ CI } [.08, .33]$). These findings suggest that enthusiastic teaching strengthens students' confidence in their reading ability and promotes students' engagement in EFL reading tasks. The study contributes to EFL reading research by highlighting the motivational role of teacher enthusiasm in supporting students' preparation, participation, vocabulary learning, and sustained engagement with reading passages. Pedagogical implications emphasize the importance of enthusiastic classroom teaching activities, and self-efficacy-building strategies in university EFL reading courses.

KEYWORDS

Teacher enthusiasm; reading self-efficacy; reading task engagement; Saudi EFL learners; psychology, motivation

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1. Introduction

In EFL university classrooms, students' reading development depends on more than their ability to understand a text during class. Reading tasks often extend across different stages of learning, including preparation before the lesson, vocabulary study, classroom participation, and later review of the same passage. Because of this, reading can become a demanding process for learners, especially when they view it as difficult, repetitive, or only limited to classroom requirements. This makes student engagement an important issue in EFL reading instruction. When students are actively engaged, they are more likely to interact with texts, build vocabulary knowledge, improve academic literacy, and develop greater independence as language learners.

Students' engagement in EFL reading tasks can also be shaped by the teacher's instruction. In reading classrooms, learners may feel hesitant to participate when they struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary, difficult texts, or low confidence in their reading ability. For this reason, the teacher's enthusiasm can become an important source of support. A teacher who teaches with energy,

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interest, and encouragement may help students see reading activities as useful rather than routine. Such enthusiasm can make the classroom atmosphere more positive and may increase students' willingness to prepare for lessons, take part in discussions, and continue working on reading tasks.

Reading self-efficacy may also play an important role in this process. Students who believe that they can understand reading passages, learn vocabulary, answer questions, and perform well in reading tasks are more likely to invest effort and persist when reading becomes challenging. For this reason, reading self-efficacy may explain how teacher enthusiasm is connected to students' engagement. In other words, enthusiastic teaching may strengthen students' confidence in their reading ability, which may then encourage stronger engagement in reading tasks.

Although previous research has examined teacher enthusiasm, self-efficacy, and student engagement in EFL classrooms, these relationships have received less attention in reading-focused learning tasks, especially among Saudi undergraduate EFL students. This gap is important because EFL reading courses require students to engage with texts repeatedly and across different stages of learning.

The present study is situated in a Saudi EFL university and focuses on Saudi male EFL undergraduate students enrolled in a course titled *reading and building vocabulary*. The course requires students to engage with reading passages through Blackboard pre-reading questions, classroom discussions, weekly vocabulary quizzes, and delayed post-reading quizzes. Specifically, the study examines the relationship between students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm and EFL reading task engagement, with reading self-efficacy tested as a mediating variable.

2. Literature Review

2.1 EFL Reading Task Engagement

In language education, student engagement has gained attention because it reflects learners' active involvement in the learning process. Rather than focusing only on classroom attendance, engagement captures the extent to which students participate, invest effort, pay attention, and show interest in learning activities. Engagement is often understood as a construct with three related dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). Behavioral engagement can be seen in students' participation, effort, attendance, and persistence when learning becomes challenging. Cognitive engagement is less visible, but it appears in the way students think about the material, use learning strategies, and try to understand the content more deeply. Emotional learning engagement is related to students' interest, enjoyment, sense of belonging, and positive feelings toward in-class and out-class activities.

In EFL reading courses, engagement significantly matters to students because successful reading requires repeated contact with texts. As Grabe (2009) explains, second language reading is a complex process that requires fluency, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension strategies, and continuous practice. Therefore, students' engagement in a reading task is not limited only to reading words; their engagement in reading tasks can be observed through their preparation before class, attention during reading activities, participation in discussions, vocabulary study, and willingness to revisit the text after class.

Previous research has shown that engagement in learning in general relates to learning quality and academic achievement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Reeve, 2012). In language learning, engagement is closely related to using strategies, investing efforts, maintaining contact with materials, and dealing with challenges (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). However, engagement in reading classes means that students are more likely to prepare for passages, take vocabulary learning seriously, contribute to discussions, and perform better in reading-related assessments. These factors that support EFL reading task engagement are important for improving both classroom participation and reading development. Therefore, understanding these factors is necessary for creating effective reading classrooms that support students' participation, motivation, and reading development.

2.2 Teacher Enthusiasm in EFL Reading Instruction

In the classroom, teacher enthusiasm can play an important role in encouraging students to engage more actively with learning. It is reflected in the way teachers show interest, energy, enjoyment, expressiveness, and commitment while teaching (Kunter et al., 2011). An enthusiastic teacher does more than just presenting information. Teacher may perform roles beyond mere

pedagogical functions to encourage students take learning actions. For example, they may help students feel that the subject is meaningful and that their learning efforts matter.

Students in EFL classrooms often struggle with issues such as limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of errors, and weak motivation. For this reason, the teacher's enthusiasm can play an important role in shaping how students respond to learning. A teacher who presents the lesson with genuine interest and creates an encouraging atmosphere may help students feel more comfortable participating and more willing to put effort into classroom tasks. This idea is supported by Keller et al. (2013), who explain that teacher enthusiasm can improve students' attention, motivation, and emotional engagement in learning. In the same way, Kunter et al. (2011) found a positive relationship between teacher enthusiasm, instructional quality, and student motivation.

In a reading course, students are not only expected to understand texts during class; they also need to prepare, think, and respond before and after the lesson. This makes reading different from some other classroom activities because much of the effort depends on the student's own commitment. Therefore, teacher enthusiasm can be important. When students see that the teacher is interested in the reading material and values the reading process, they may feel that the tasks have a real purpose. This can make them more willing to prepare vocabulary, answer pre-reading questions, and join classroom discussions instead of treating these activities as simple requirements.

Previous EFL research has placed teacher enthusiasm at the beginning of the motivational process and has shown that students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm are related to classroom engagement (Dewaele & Li, 2021). Building on this logic, the present study proposes that students who perceive their reading teacher as enthusiastic will demonstrate stronger engagement in reading tasks.

2.3 Reading Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a key concept in social cognitive theory and refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to plan and perform the actions required to reach a particular goal. Bandura (1997) argues that, unlike general confidence, self-efficacy is a task-specific confidence because it is connected to what learners believe they can do in a particular learning situation. Schunk and Pajares (2002) claim that students with high self-efficacy are more likely to attempt challenging tasks, invest effort, use effective strategies, and persist when they face difficulty.

Students' beliefs about their own ability can affect how they deal with reading-related activities because these activities depend on their comprehension of unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence patterns. Mills et al. (2006) argue that self-efficacy is closely related to important aspects of language learning, such as motivation, anxiety, strategy use, and achievement. They also emphasize that self-efficacy is especially important for foreign language learners when performing reading tasks.

In a reading class, repeated preparation, successful quiz performance, encouraging feedback, and positive interaction with the teacher and classmates may increase students' belief in their reading ability. The improvement that students achieve positively influences them to continue engaging in the learning process. Teacher enthusiasm may support this process by making reading tasks feel achievable and worthwhile. Bandura (1997) suggests that this connection is shaped by mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional states. In the context of this study, reading self-efficacy includes students' confidence in understanding reading passages, answering pre-reading questions, learning vocabulary, contributing to class discussion, and preparing for post-reading quizzes.

2.4 Reading Self-Efficacy and EFL Reading Task Engagement

Reading self-efficacy is related to students' engagement in reading tasks. When students believe they can complete a reading task, they are more likely to continue working even when the task becomes more challenging. However, students who doubt their ability may deal with the task in a weaker way by avoiding it, doing only the minimum, or reducing participation. This relationship has been widely discussed in educational psychology, where self-efficacy is viewed as a major predictor of motivation, effort, persistence, and self-regulated learning (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

EFL reading engagement leads students to invest effort in the stages of reading instruction: before, during, and after class. For example, before class, they may be more willing to answer pre-reading questions or prepare questions for the class discussion. During class, they may answer questions or take part in discussions. After class, they may engage in post-reading activities and

revisions. Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) and Schunk and Pajares (2002) suggest that students' beliefs about their abilities are connected to their learning behaviors and emotional engagement.

2.5 Reading Self-Efficacy as a Mediator

Reading self-efficacy, in this context, acts as a mediating factor between teacher enthusiasm and students' engagement. When students' beliefs about their abilities are supported by teacher enthusiasm, their engagement is encouraged and motivated. Reading self-efficacy helps explain why teacher enthusiasm can lead to stronger student engagement through creating a supportive learning environment that strengthens students' confidence to participate more actively, persist in reading tasks, and show greater engagement in learning (Lazarides et al., 2021).

Reading self-efficacy is also indirectly related to social cognitive theory as it helps explain why self-efficacy can act as a mediator between teacher enthusiasm and students' engagement. The learning environment provided by teacher enthusiasm, support, and commitment shapes their beliefs in the classroom. Therefore, students' beliefs about their ability are not formed in isolation. Bandura (1997) explains that environmental factors, such as social encouragement and learning conditions, can shape learners' self-efficacy beliefs. These beliefs then influence behavior, effort, and persistence.

This reading-specific mediation model is important because students are often expected to continue working on language development outside the classroom. Teacher enthusiasm may trigger student engagement. It can also initially create a positive motivational atmosphere, but students also need to believe that they are capable of using that motivation effectively for further effort. Psychologically, reading self-efficacy may explain how teacher enthusiasm is translated into actual engagement before, during, and after class.

Previous work has followed a similar mediation logic by examining whether self-efficacy explains the relationship between perceived teacher enthusiasm and EFL classroom engagement (Pajares, 2002). The present study adapts this model to a reading-specific context by focusing on reading self-efficacy and reading task engagement rather than general EFL classroom engagement.

3. Method

The study focused on examining how three classroom-related variables are connected: students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm, their reading self-efficacy, and their engagement in EFL reading tasks. A quantitative correlational design was used to investigate correlational relationships among naturally occurring classroom variables. This design was guided by social cognitive theory, which suggests that learners' beliefs about their capabilities influence their effort, persistence, and engagement in academic tasks (Bandura, 1997). The design was also employed by previous research on teacher enthusiasm and EFL engagement, which suggests that students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm may affect engagement directly, as well as indirectly through self-efficacy (Pajares, 2002). In the present study, this model was adapted to a reading-specific context by focusing on reading self-efficacy and EFL reading task engagement in a reading course at a Saudi university.

3.1 Participants and Context

The participants in this study were 74 male Saudi EFL undergraduate students enrolled in two sections of a course titled *reading and building vocabulary* at Qassim University. Each section included 37 students, and the students' ages ranged from 19 to 26 years. All participants were Saudi learners of English as a foreign language and were studying English within the same university context. The use of two sections of the same course helped provide a classroom-based sample that reflected the authentic instructional setting of the study.

The participants were selected through convenience sampling because they were available to the researcher and were enrolled in a course directly related to the focus of the study. The course was suitable for the present research because it required students to engage regularly with reading-related tasks, vocabulary preparation, classroom participation, and post-reading activities. These course requirements were closely connected to the main variables examined in the study: perceived teacher enthusiasm, reading self-efficacy, and EFL reading task engagement. Since both sections had the same number of students and followed the same course structure, this helped reduce major differences in learning conditions, course content, and assessment procedures.

The sample size of 74 participants was considered appropriate for the classroom-based and correlational nature of the study. Because the study was conducted in an authentic context of, namely in an EFL reading course, the sample reflected the number of students available in the selected sections. Although the participants were not randomly selected, their shared academic context made them appropriate for investigating the relationship between students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm, reading self-efficacy, and engagement in EFL reading tasks. However, the use of convenience sampling and male-only participants may limit the generalizability of the findings.

3.2. Context of the Study

All participants were taking the same course during the same academic term. They were also taught through the same course requirements and assessment methods. The course was designed to encourage students to engage with reading passages before, during, and after class. Before each reading lesson, students were required to answer general pre-reading questions about the assigned passage on Blackboard one or two days before class. They were also required to bring a copy of their questions and answers to class for discussion. During the course, students studied vocabulary items from the reading passages and completed weekly vocabulary quizzes throughout the 14-week term. In addition, students were required to revisit the reading passages after classroom instruction in preparation for delayed post-reading quizzes.

This context was suitable for the present study because reading engagement was not limited to in-class participation. Instead, students were expected to demonstrate engagement through preparation before class, participation during class discussion, vocabulary study, and post-reading review. Therefore, the course provided a meaningful setting for examining how teacher enthusiasm and reading self-efficacy may contribute to students' engagement in EFL reading tasks.

3.3. Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections: demographic information, students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm, reading self-efficacy, and EFL reading task engagement. All questionnaire items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was written in clear English suitable for undergraduate EFL learners.

Students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm were measured using items adapted from previous research (Kunter et al., 2011; Keller et al., 2013). The scale measured the extent to which students perceived their teacher as energetic, interested, encouraging, and committed during reading instruction. Items focused on the teacher's enthusiasm for reading passages, vocabulary learning, class discussion, and students' preparation. An example from this item is "My teacher shows enthusiasm when teaching reading."

Reading self-efficacy was measured using items adapted from self-efficacy research in language learning and reading contexts (Bandura, 1997; Mills et al., 2006; Schunk & Pajares, 2002). The items in this scale assessed students' confidence in their ability to complete reading-related tasks. Items focused on their ability to understanding passages, answer pre-reading questions, learn vocabulary, participate in discussions, and prepare for delayed post-reading quizzes. For example, one item reads, "I am confident that I can understand reading texts."

Reading engagement was measured following the framework proposed by Fredricks et al. (2004), which was adapted to suit the specific tasks required in the Reading and Building Vocabulary course. The scale consists of three dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Behavioral engagement referred to students' completion of tasks, preparation, attendance, participation, and effort, such as "I participate actively in reading activities" or "I complete the assigned reading tasks." Cognitive engagement referred to students' use of strategies, attention to meaning, and effort to understand the passages, such as "I try to understand the main ideas of the reading passage" or "I use reading strategies to help me understand the text." Emotional engagement referred to students' interest, enjoyment, and positive feelings toward reading tasks, such as "I enjoy reading activities" and "I feel interested when working on reading tasks."

3.4 Validity and Reliability Procedures

The researcher followed a number of steps to strengthen the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. First, as mentioned above, the items were adapted from previous studies on teacher enthusiasm, self-efficacy, and student engagement (Bandura, 1997; Fredricks et al., 2004; Kunter et al., 2011; Mills et al., 2006) to suit the specific requirements of the Reading and Building Vocabulary course. Second, the items were reviewed for content relevance to ensure that they reflected the actual practices of the context of the study.

Third, the questionnaire was checked for clarity, wording, and suitability. Fourth, Cronbach's alpha was used to examine internal consistency reliability for each scale. A Cronbach's alpha value of .70 or above was considered acceptable for research purposes (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Composite scores were then calculated by averaging the items belonging to each construct.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Data were collected during the academic term but after students had already been exposed to the main requirements and experiences of the reading course, so that they were able to evaluate their teacher's enthusiasm, their own engagement, and their reading self-efficacy.

The questionnaire was administered during class time in the absence of both the researcher and the course teacher. Before students responded to the questionnaire, they were explicitly informed that the questionnaire was intended to just gather their perceptions of their reading learning experience. They were also assured that their participation was voluntary and would not influence their grades.

3.6. Data Analysis

The researcher prepared the questionnaire data for statistical testing before starting the analysis of the responses. The responses were first reviewed to identify any incomplete data, unusual answering patterns, or extreme values that could affect the accuracy of the results. After the dataset was checked, the main study variables were summarized statistically. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to describe students' levels of perceived teacher enthusiasm, reading self-efficacy, and EFL reading task engagement. Finally, the internal consistency of each questionnaire scale was assessed through reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha.

Second, Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships among the three main variables. Third, mediation analysis was conducted to test whether reading self-efficacy mediated the relationship between perceived teacher enthusiasm and EFL reading task engagement. The mediation model followed the logic of regression-based mediation analysis, in which perceived teacher enthusiasm was entered as the independent variable, reading self-efficacy as the mediator, and EFL reading task engagement as the dependent variable. The indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, as recommended for mediation analysis because it does not require the assumption of normality of the indirect effect (Hayes, 2018; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). A mediation effect was considered statistically significant when the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero.

The direct effect of perceived teacher enthusiasm on EFL reading task engagement was also examined after including reading self-efficacy in the model. Given the sample size of 74 students, the analysis focused on a simple mediation model rather than a more complex structural equation model or multi-group analysis.

4. Results

4.1 Preliminary Analysis

The dataset was screened for missing values, outliers, and response patterns before the main analyses were conducted. The screening process did not reveal any substantial missing-data problems for all the 74 responses. In addition, the distribution of the main variables was examined through skewness and kurtosis, and the obtained values were within acceptable ranges. After these preliminary checks, reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for perceived teacher enthusiasm, reading self-efficacy, and EFL reading task engagement.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of the Main Variables

Variable	No. of items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Perceived teacher enthusiasm	6	4.18	0.61	.89
Reading self-efficacy	7	3.91	0.66	.87
EFL reading task engagement	9	3.84	0.70	.91

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships among perceived teacher enthusiasm, reading self-efficacy, and EFL reading task engagement. Table 2 presents the correlation matrix.

Table 2
Pearson Correlations Among the Main Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Perceived teacher enthusiasm	-		
2. Reading self-efficacy	.46***	-	
3. EFL reading task engagement	.50***	.56***	-

Note. N = 74. ***p < .001.

4.3 Direct Effects

Regression analyses were conducted to test the direct paths in the proposed model. Table 3 presents the standardized coefficients, standard errors, t values, and p values for each tested path.

Table 3
Regression Results for the Proposed Mediation Model

Path	beta	SE	t	p	Result
Teacher enthusiasm - Reading self-efficacy	.46	.10	4.39	< .001	Supported
Teacher enthusiasm - Reading task engagement	.50	.09	4.89	< .001	Supported
Reading self-efficacy - Reading task engagement	.42	.11	3.96	< .001	Supported
Teacher enthusiasm -Reading task engagement, controlling for self-efficacy	.31	.10	2.98	.004	Supported

4.4 Mediation Analysis

A bootstrapping mediation analysis with 5,000 resamples was conducted to test the indirect effect of perceived teacher enthusiasm on EFL reading task engagement through reading self-efficacy. Table 4 presents the bootstrapping results.

Table 4
Bootstrapping Results for the Indirect Effect

Indirect path	beta	SE	95% CI	Result
Teacher enthusiasm - Reading self-efficacy - Reading task engagement	.19	.06	[.08, .33]	Significant

4.5 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 summarizes the results of the four hypotheses.

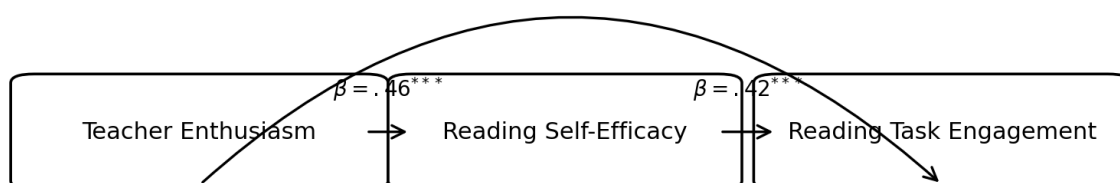
Table 5
Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm positively predict EFL reading task engagement.	Supported
H2	Students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm positively predict reading self-efficacy.	Supported
H3	Reading self-efficacy positively predicts EFL reading task engagement.	Supported
H4	Reading self-efficacy mediates the relationship between students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm and EFL reading task engagement.	Supported

4.6 Final Mediation Model

Figure 1 presents the final mediation model with standardized coefficients.

Figure 1. Final mediation model. Note. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.



direct effect: $\beta = .31^{**}$

indirect effect: $\beta = .19$, 95% CI [.08, .33]

5. Discussion

This study examined the relationship between students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm and EFL reading task engagement, with reading self-efficacy tested as a mediating variable. The findings supported all four hypotheses. Students who perceived their teacher as more enthusiastic reported higher levels of engagement in reading tasks. Perceived teacher enthusiasm also positively predicted reading self-efficacy, and reading self-efficacy positively predicted EFL reading task engagement. Most importantly, reading self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between teacher enthusiasm and reading task engagement. These findings suggest that teacher enthusiasm may encourage reading engagement not only by making the classroom more motivating, but also by strengthening students' confidence in their ability to complete reading-related tasks successfully.

The first finding showed that students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm positively predicted EFL reading task engagement. This result is consistent with previous research showing that teacher enthusiasm can increase students' motivation, attention, enjoyment, and classroom involvement (Keller et al., 2013; Kunter et al., 2011). In the present study, this relationship appeared in a reading-specific context. Students who perceived their teacher as energetic, committed, and genuinely interested in reading instruction were more likely to engage actively with the different requirements of the course. Their engagement was not limited to classroom participation but also extended to preparation and follow-up tasks, such as completing pre-reading questions on Blackboard, studying vocabulary for weekly quizzes, contributing to classroom discussions, and taking delayed post-reading quizzes. This finding is meaningful because it shows the extent to which EFL reading students were involved in the reading course. The finding also reveals that the course requirements were no longer perceived as routine assignments.

The second finding indicated that perceived teacher enthusiasm positively predicted reading self-efficacy. This suggests that enthusiastic teaching may help students believe that they are capable of understanding reading passages, learning vocabulary, answering questions, and performing successfully in reading assessments. Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory previously has established this relationship. It emphasizes that social and environmental factors, such as encouragement, feedback, modeling, positive emotional experiences, and hesitation reduction can shape self-efficacy and increase involvement.

The third finding showed that students' engagement is strongly connected to their self-efficacy. Within the context of this study, students with higher reading self-efficacy appeared to engage more fully across the different stages of reading instruction, either before, during, or after the lesson. This result is consistent with previous research suggesting that students with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to invest effort, use strategies, encounter challenges, and participate actively in academic tasks (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

The mediation result is the most important contribution of this study. Reading self-efficacy partially played a mediator role between perceived teacher enthusiasm and EFL reading task engagement. This means that enthusiastic teaching had a direct effect on students' reading self-efficacy, and self-efficacy, in turn strengthened students' engagement. This finding supports previous EFL research showing that self-efficacy can explain part of the relationship between perceived teacher enthusiasm and classroom engagement (Pajares, 2002). However, the present study specifically extends this relationship to EFL reading task engagement in the classroom. It mainly focused on students' concrete reading-course behaviors, such as Blackboard pre-reading preparation, vocabulary quiz preparation, classroom discussion, and delayed post-reading review.

In this sense, reading self-efficacy acts as a psychological mediator between the teacher stimuli and the students' responses to reading tasks. This formation indicates that if students' responses are not produced, teacher enthusiasm may not be effectively translated into improved reading engagement. Even if a teacher is energetic and positive, students still need to believe that they can succeed in the reading tasks in order to engage actively. When enthusiasm is combined with practices that build students' confidence, the psychological formation becomes more effective and engagement-oriented. Therefore, teachers should not only show enthusiasm for reading but also design tasks that allow students to experience progress and success.

EFL learners vary depending on their individual differences in language proficiency. They also vary in their reading confidence, vocabulary knowledge, and willingness to participate in English discussions. In such contexts, reading instruction may become teacher-centered if students do not feel capable of preparing or contributing. The present findings suggest that teacher enthusiasm can help create a more active reading environment, but its effect becomes stronger when it supports students' belief that they can handle the reading demands of the course.

Overall, the findings suggest that successful engagement in EFL reading is not shaped by instructional materials alone, but also by the classroom social and psychological conditions. When teachers show enthusiasm, they help establish a positive learning climate that can encourage students to approach reading tasks more willingly. However, this influence becomes meaningful when students develop confidence in their own reading ability. In this way, reading self-efficacy serves as the link through which teacher enthusiasm is transformed into active engagement.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study offer several implications for EFL reading instruction in university contexts. First, teacher enthusiasm can play a practical role in supporting students' engagement. However, it should not be viewed only from the teacher's enthusiasm perspective; rather all the three variables interplay to influence how students respond to reading tasks.

Second, EFL reading teachers should make their enthusiasm visible and purposeful during instruction. This can be achieved through clear communication of why reading tasks matter and disciplined implementation of the course requirements. Specific attention of teachers to classroom reading process makes enthusiasm visible to students. Therefore, enthusiasm should be connected directly to the reading activities, such as showing interest in the passage topic, assigning pre-reading activities, giving feedback to students' responses, encouraging students' interpretations, and treating vocabulary learning as a useful tool for comprehension rather than as isolated memorization.

Third, teachers should intentionally build students' reading self-efficacy. Since reading self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between teacher enthusiasm and reading task engagement, students need more than exposure to enthusiastic teaching; they also need repeated experiences that help them believe they can succeed. Teachers can support reading self-efficacy by breaking reading tasks into manageable steps, modeling how to approach difficult passages, giving constructive feedback, and highlighting students' improvement over time. Bandura's (1997) confirms that self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences, verbal encouragement, and positive emotional conditions.

Fourth, pre-reading tasks should be designed as meaningful preparation rather than routine homework. In this study, students completed pre-reading questions on Blackboard before class and brought their answers for discussion. This practice can be

pedagogically valuable if students see that their preparation is supported by the teacher discipline arrangement during the class. Teachers should therefore refer to students' pre-reading answers, compare different responses, ask follow-up questions, and show how preparation helps comprehension. When students recognize that pre-reading work has a clear role in class discussion, they are more likely to engage behaviorally and cognitively with the task.

Fifth, vocabulary quizzes can be more effective when they are based on the reading passages of the course and integrated into reading comprehension. Teachers can strengthen the value of vocabulary learning by asking students to use new words in context, identify them in the passage, connect them to the main idea, and review them after reading through post-reading assignments. In this way, vocabulary learning and vocabulary quizzes become part of the reading process itself, strengthening their reading self-efficacy and engagement.

Sixth, delayed post-reading quizzes or post-reading assignments can be used to promote sustained engagement with reading passages beyond the classroom discussion. Delayed quizzes can encourage Students to revisit the passage, review key vocabulary, and strengthen their understanding over time. However, teachers need to make the purpose of these quizzes clear so that students see them as a way to support retention and deepen their reading comprehension, rather than as additional assessment pressure. Like pre-reading tasks, Post-reading homework should serve to push students to follow-up to classroom discussion and teacher explanation rather than being treated as a routine assignment.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its useful contribution, this study has several limitations. Since the study used a correlational design and relied on students' self-report questionnaires, the findings cannot confirm that there are causal relationships between teacher enthusiasm, reading self-efficacy, and EFL reading task engagement. Future studies could use longitudinal or experimental designs, along with classroom observations, interviews, teacher reflections, or Blackboard learning analytics, to provide stronger evidence of how students actually engage with reading tasks over time. In addition, the study did not directly examine students' reading performance, so future research could include vocabulary quiz scores, reading comprehension tests, attendance, or task completion rates to determine whether engagement and self-efficacy lead to measurable improvement. The study was also limited by its small sample of 74 Saudi male EFL undergraduate students from one university, which means the findings should be understood within this specific context. Therefore, future studies should include larger and more diverse samples across different sections, genders, educational levels, and cultural settings to improve the generalizability of the results.

8. Conclusion

This study shows that EFL reading task engagement is influenced by different factors related to teachers and learners. The findings suggest that when students perceive their teacher as enthusiastic, they are more likely to feel confident and become more engaged in reading activities. Reading self-efficacy played an important role in this relationship, as it partially explained how teacher enthusiasm was connected to students' preparation, vocabulary learning, classroom discussion, and delayed post-reading review. Therefore, the study contributes to EFL reading research by showing that effective reading instruction should be both motivating and supportive.

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