

Exploring Eighth Grade Students' Perceptions of Their Reading Skills through Self-Assessment at MTS Al Madinah Bolo

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore eighth-grade students' perceptions of their reading skills as reflected through self-assessment. Employing a descriptive quantitative research design, the study involved 14 eighth-grade students from a junior high school selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a Reading Self-Assessment Questionnaire consisting of seven indicators: reading engagement, reading comprehension, strategy use, self-monitoring, reading stamina, reading accuracy, and reading pace. Students responded to each item using a three-point scale (Yes, Somewhat, No), and the data were analyzed through frequency counts and percentage calculations. The findings revealed that students held the most positive perceptions of their reading stamina, with 92.9% reporting confidence in sustaining reading for extended periods. Strategy use also received relatively positive responses, with 50% of students indicating that they actively employed reading strategies when encountering difficulties. However, significant challenges were identified in reading accuracy, comprehension, and self-monitoring. A considerable proportion of students (78.6%) reported difficulties in reading words correctly, while 85.7% indicated that they rarely engaged in retelling as a comprehension monitoring strategy. These findings suggest that while students demonstrate willingness to engage in reading activities, they continue to face challenges in higher-order reading processes. The study underscores the importance of integrating self-assessment into reading instruction as a reflective and diagnostic tool, and recommends that teachers provide explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, vocabulary development, and metacognitive practices to support more effective and autonomous reading development at the junior high school level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is widely regarded as one of the most fundamental skills in language education, serving as a gateway to knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and academic success. In the context of English language learning, reading plays a central role in shaping students' overall linguistic competence. At the Junior High School (SMP) level, reading skills encompass various aspects, ranging from the ability to understand simple texts to more complex ones, such as descriptive, narrative, and recount texts. In accordance with the applicable curriculum, the level of material and the degree of text difficulty taught in eighth grade are progressively higher than those of previous levels, reflecting the cognitive development and growing academic demands placed upon students at this age. At this stage, students are also transitioning from learning to read toward reading to learn a shift that demands more sophisticated reading strategies, including inferencing, synthesizing,

and evaluating information. However, based on various studies, reading skill remains one of the aspects that eighth grade students find most difficult to master. This is because developing good reading ability requires students to understand the overall content of a text, identify main and supporting ideas, comprehend vocabulary in context, draw conclusions from both explicit and implicit information, and connect the content of the reading with their prior experiences and background knowledge (Fikri Asih Wigati). Many students also struggle with higher-order reading processes such as making inferences, identifying main ideas, and critically evaluating the content of a text. Given the complexity of these demands, it becomes increasingly important to understand not only how well students perform in reading, but also how they perceive and evaluate their own reading abilities.

This is where self-assessment plays a crucial role. As a metacognitive tool, self-assessment allows learners to reflect on their own capabilities, identify areas of strength and weakness, and take greater ownership of their learning process. When students are given the opportunity to evaluate their reading skills, their responses reveal not only what they think they can or cannot do, but also how their beliefs and attitudes may shape their actual reading behaviours in the classroom. In the context of reading instruction, this kind of reflective practice is especially valuable, as it encourages students to become more aware of the strategies they use and the challenges, they face when engaging with English texts. These challenges are often compounded by a lack of metacognitive awareness that is, students' limited understanding of how they read and what strategies they can employ to improve their comprehension making self-assessment an even more essential component of effective reading development. Research in educational has consistently shown that learners' self-assessment accuracy is closely tied to their academic performance and persistence in difficult tasks (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000), suggesting that how eighth grade students perceive their own reading skills may be just as significant as their actual performance in shaping their long-term reading development.

Beyond the measurable outcomes of reading performance, what students themselves believe about their reading abilities their self-perceptions have increasingly been recognized as a powerful determinant of learning engagement, motivation, and achievement. When students assess their own reading skills, they engage in a process of self-reflection that can reveal their beliefs, attitudes, and confidence levels toward reading in English. Such insights are particularly meaningful for teachers and curriculum designers, as they provide a learner-centered perspective that standardized tests and teacher evaluations alone cannot fully capture. Understanding how eighth grade students perceive their own reading skills is therefore essential for educators who seek to design instruction that is both responsive and empowering.

Despite the growing body of literature on reading instruction and assessment, relatively few studies have focused specifically on how middle school students in Indonesia perceive their own reading competencies. Most existing research tends to emphasize teacher-led evaluation and standardized testing, leaving a significant gap in understanding the learner's internal perspective. This gap is particularly critical at the eighth-grade level, where students face increasing academic demands yet remain underrepresented in learner-centered reading research. Without understanding how students perceive their own abilities, instructional efforts may fail to address the actual confidence levels, attitudes, and learning needs that students bring into the reading classroom.

Therefore, this study aims to explore eighth grade students' perceptions of their reading skills as reflected through self-assessment, with the broader goal of informing more learner-centered approaches to reading instruction. More specifically, this research investigates

how students at the junior high school level evaluate their own reading abilities, including their awareness of strengths and weaknesses in comprehending various types of English texts. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more responsive, reflective, and student-centered reading instruction at the junior high school level, ultimately bridging the gap between how students perceive their reading competencies and how those perceptions can be harnessed to improve learning outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading has been conceptualized in numerous ways across the literature, reflecting its complex and multidimensional nature. At its most fundamental level, reading is understood as an interactive process in which readers engage with written text to construct meaning (Alderson, 2000). Going beyond mere decoding, scholars have emphasized that reading involves understanding, interpreting, and engaging with written language as a communicative act (Jack, 2019). Similarly, Chen (2020) describes reading as a dynamic interplay between language and thought, in which readers decode written symbols to reconstruct the writer's intended meaning. From a cognitive standpoint, Amini et al. (2020) further characterize reading as both a cognitive and metacognitive process, through which readers deploy a range of strategies to comprehend texts effectively. Urquhart and Weir (1988, p. 22) offer a complementary perspective, defining reading as a process of *receiving* and *interpreting* information encoded in language form via the medium of print, while Schmidt et al. (2002) broadly characterize it as the perception of written text for the purpose of *comprehending* its content. Together, these perspectives underscore that reading is not a passive reception of information but an active, purposeful process of meaning-making.

Building on these foundational understandings, researchers have further examined the functional dimensions of reading as an academic and social skill. Grabe (2009, p. 5) highlights reading as a central part of academic life, through which students gain access to knowledge from informational texts essential for academic achievement. From a communicative perspective, Par (2020) describes reading as a dynamic process of constructing meaning through the use of appropriate reading strategies, while Hoover (2024) emphasizes that effective reading requires the integration of word recognition and language comprehension working together to derive meaning from text. Cox and Feez (2019) similarly position reading as a meaning-making activity that draws upon skills, knowledge, and dispositions to engage with written text. In terms of reading skill specifically, Grabe (2009) and Afflerbach et al. (2008) define it as the ability to recognize, process, and understand written texts effectively, encompassing accurate decoding, reading fluency, and the construction of meaning through comprehension.

In the context of language learning and education, self-assessment is broadly understood as a reflective practice through which learners evaluate their own performance, abilities, and progress. Andrade (2019) defines self-assessment as the act of monitoring one's processes and products in order to make adjustments that deepen learning and enhance performance. While self-assessment can function summatively, Andrade's review of the literature strongly suggests that it yields the greatest benefits for both achievement and self-regulated learning when employed formatively and when students are adequately trained in how to use it. Andrade and Brookhart (2020) further position classroom self-assessment as a co-regulatory mechanism that supports learners in taking greater ownership of their academic development.

Self-assessment can be as simple as "guessing a grade", or can be a complicated process during which, students engage in different actions, such as determining standards and/or criteria, seeking feedback information, reflecting on one's own performance,

making and calibrating self-assessment judgement (Panadero et al., [2016](#); Yan & Brown, [2017](#)).

The concept of reading skill is equally multifaceted. In broad terms, reading skill refers to the cognitive abilities needed to decode, understand, interpret, and evaluate written text — encompassing phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension — and is fundamental for academic success, critical thinking, and information retention. More specifically in the language learning context, Panadero et al. (2016) and Yan and Brown (2017) have highlighted that learners who engage in systematic self-evaluation of their reading are better positioned to identify gaps in their comprehension and regulate their own learning strategies accordingly. The development of reading skill is therefore not solely a linguistic achievement; it also requires students to become reflective and self-aware readers. This connection between reading performance and self-assessment forms a central concern of the present study, as it investigates how eighth-grade students perceive and evaluate their own reading abilities across multiple dimensions.

3. METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to explore eighth-grade students' perceptions of their reading skills through self-assessment. The study focused on describing how students evaluated their own reading abilities across several aspects of reading, including engagement, comprehension, strategy use, self-monitoring, reading stamina, reading accuracy, and reading pace.

Participants

The participants of this study were 14 eighth-grade students from a junior high school. The participants were selected using total sampling because all students in the class participated in the self-assessment activity.

Instrument

The data were collected using a Reading Self-Assessment Questionnaire adapted from reading self-assessment practices commonly used in reading instruction. The questionnaire consisted of seven indicators:

1. Staying focused and engaged while reading.
2. Understanding the story or information in the text.
3. Using reading strategies when encountering difficulties.
4. Retelling the story or explaining key details before continuing to read.
5. Reading for a longer amount of time.
6. Reading words correctly.
7. Maintaining an appropriate reading pace.

For each statement, students selected one of three response categories: Yes, Somewhat, or No. These responses were intended to reflect students' perceptions of their reading skills and reading behaviours.

Data Collection

Data were collected during a classroom reading activity. After completing the reading task, students were asked to evaluate their reading performance using the self-assessment questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were then collected and tabulated for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The frequency of responses for each category (Yes, Somewhat, and No) was calculated for every indicator. The frequencies were then converted into percentages using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

where:

- P = percentage,
- f = frequency of responses,
- N = total number of participants.

The results were presented in tables and interpreted descriptively to identify students' perceptions of their reading skills across the seven assessed dimensions.

Result

To investigate students' perceptions of their reading skills, responses from the reading self-assessment questionnaire were analysed descriptively. The questionnaire examined seven dimensions of reading, namely reading engagement, reading comprehension, strategy use, self-monitoring, reading stamina, reading accuracy, and reading pace. Students' responses were categorized into three levels (*Yes*, *Somewhat*, and *No*) and subsequently converted into frequencies and percentages. The distribution of responses across the seven dimensions is presented in Table 1, providing an overview of students' perceived strengths and weaknesses in reading.

Table 1. Students' Self-Assessment of Reading Skills (N = 14)

Reading Skill Indicator	Yes n (%)	Somewhat n (%)	No n (%)
Staying focused and engaged while reading	4 (28.6%)	10 (71.4%)	0 (0%)
Understanding the story or information in the text	3 (21.4%)	5 (35.7%)	6 (42.9%)
Using reading strategies when confused	7 (50.0%)	4 (28.6%)	3 (21.4%)
Retelling the story or explaining key details	0 (0%)	2 (14.3%)	12 (85.7%)
Reading for a longer amount of time	13 (92.9%)	1 (7.1%)	0 (0%)
Reading words correctly	2 (14.3%)	1 (7.1%)	11 (78.6%)
Maintaining an appropriate reading pace	2 (14.3%)	12 (85.7%)	0 (0%)

The data presented in Table 1 reveal several patterns in students' perceptions of their reading skills. Among the seven dimensions assessed, reading stamina received the most positive responses. Thirteen students (92.9%) reported that they were able to read for a longer amount of time, indicating a high level of confidence in their ability to sustain reading activities. This finding suggests that most students perceived themselves as capable of maintaining attention and engagement during reading tasks for extended periods.

The results also show that the use of reading strategies when encountering difficulties was **perceived** positively by many students. Seven students (50.0%) selected *Yes*, while four students (28.6%) selected *Somewhat*. These findings indicate that a considerable proportion of students were aware of the importance of employing strategies to support comprehension when facing unfamiliar or challenging parts of a text.

In terms of reading engagement, most students (71.4%) selected *Somewhat*, while only 28.6% selected *Yes*. Although none of the participants reported a negative perception in this area, the predominance of *Somewhat* responses suggests that many students were not fully confident about their ability to remain focused and engaged throughout the reading process.

A similar pattern was found for reading pace. The majority of students (85.7%) selected *Somewhat*, indicating uncertainty regarding whether they maintained an appropriate reading **speed**. Only a small proportion of students perceived their reading pace positively. This finding suggests that students may still be developing fluency and confidence in regulating their reading rate.

The results further indicate challenges related to reading comprehension. While three students (21.4%) believed that they understood the story or information presented in the text, six students (42.9%) selected *No*. This suggests that understanding written texts remains difficult for a substantial number of students and may require further instructional support.

The findings become more pronounced in the dimension of self-monitoring through retelling. Twelve students (85.7%) reported that they did not stop to retell the story or explain key details before continuing to read. This result indicates that students rarely engaged in reflective practices that help monitor comprehension and reinforce understanding during reading.

Similarly, reading accuracy emerged as one of the weakest dimensions. Eleven students (78.6%) reported that they did not always read words correctly, while only two students (14.3%) perceived themselves as accurate readers. This finding suggests that difficulties related to word recognition and decoding may still affect students' overall reading performance.

Overall, the self-assessment results indicate that students perceived their strongest reading skill to be reading stamina, followed by strategy use, whereas reading accuracy, reading comprehension, and self-monitoring were identified as areas requiring improvement. These findings provide an overview of students' perceived strengths and weaknesses and highlight aspects of reading that may benefit from targeted instructional interventions.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide insights into how eighth-grade students perceive their reading skills through self-assessment. Overall, the results indicate that students demonstrated relatively positive perceptions of their reading stamina and strategy use, while reporting lower confidence in reading comprehension, reading accuracy, and self-monitoring. These findings highlight the multidimensional nature of reading and suggest that students' confidence may vary across different aspects of reading performance, consistent with the view that reading comprises distinct but interrelated skills that develop at different rates (Grabe & Stoller, 2020).

One notable finding is the high percentage of positive responses related to reading stamina. Most students perceived themselves as capable of reading for extended periods, suggesting a willingness to engage with reading activities. This finding aligns with the view that engagement is an important component of reading development. Students who are willing to spend more time reading are generally exposed to greater amounts of language input, which can contribute to vocabulary growth, reading fluency, and comprehension development. Although reading stamina does not automatically guarantee successful comprehension, it reflects a positive disposition toward reading that can support long-term literacy development (Afflerbach et al., 2022).

The findings also reveal that many students perceived themselves as using reading strategies when encountering difficulties. This result is consistent with theories of strategic reading, which emphasize the importance of employing cognitive and metacognitive strategies to facilitate comprehension. According to researchers in reading and metacognition, effective readers actively use strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing to construct meaning from texts (Amini et al., 2020; Par, 2020). The fact that many students reported using strategies suggests an awareness of the need to address comprehension difficulties during reading. However, the relatively low levels of perceived comprehension found in this study indicate that students may not always apply these strategies effectively or consistently.

Another important finding concerns students' perceptions of reading comprehension. A substantial proportion of students reported uncertainty or difficulty in understanding the texts they read. This finding supports previous research showing that comprehension remains one of the most challenging aspects of reading for language learners (Alderson, 2000; Hoover, 2024). Reading comprehension requires readers to integrate vocabulary knowledge, grammatical understanding, background knowledge, and inferential skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). Therefore, difficulties in any of these areas may hinder students' ability to construct meaning from written texts.

The study further found that students rarely engaged in retelling or explaining key information while reading. From a theoretical perspective, retelling is considered a metacognitive strategy that enables readers to monitor comprehension and evaluate whether they have understood a text. The low frequency of positive responses on this indicator suggests that students may have limited metacognitive awareness during reading. This finding is consistent with studies emphasizing that less proficient readers often focus primarily on decoding words and answering questions rather than actively monitoring their own understanding. As a result, they may fail to recognize misunderstandings or employ corrective strategies when comprehension breaks down (Andrade, 2019; Panadero et al., 2016).

Reading accuracy also emerged as an area of concern. Most students reported difficulties in reading words correctly, suggesting challenges related to word recognition and decoding. This finding is significant because reading accuracy forms an essential foundation for reading fluency and comprehension. Research has consistently demonstrated that readers who struggle with accurate word recognition devote considerable cognitive resources to decoding, leaving fewer resources available for meaning construction (Hoover, 2024; Grabe, 2009). Consequently, difficulties in reading accuracy may contribute to the lower levels of comprehension reported by some students in this study.

The findings also demonstrate the value of self-assessment as a tool for promoting learner reflection. Self-assessment encourages students to evaluate their own performance, identify strengths and weaknesses, and become more aware of their learning processes. From the perspective of learner autonomy, self-assessment can support the development of self-regulated learning by encouraging students to take greater responsibility for their progress (Andrade & Brookhart, 2020; Panadero et al., 2023). Although self-assessment reflects students' perceptions rather than objective performance, it provides valuable information about how students view their own reading abilities and the challenges they experience during reading activities.

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications. First, teachers should provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies, particularly strategies that support comprehension monitoring, such as summarizing, questioning,

predicting, and retelling. These strategies can help students become more active and reflective readers (Andrade, 2019; Par, 2020).

Second, the low levels of perceived reading accuracy suggest a need for instructional activities that strengthen vocabulary knowledge, word recognition, and reading fluency. Guided reading, repeated reading, and vocabulary-focused instruction may help students improve their accuracy and confidence in reading.

Third, the findings highlight the importance of integrating self-assessment into reading instruction. By regularly engaging in self-assessment activities, students can develop greater awareness of their reading behaviors and learning needs. Such awareness may support the development of metacognitive skills and foster greater learner autonomy.

Finally, teachers can use self-assessment data as a diagnostic tool to identify areas in which students require additional support. Rather than relying solely on test scores, educators can gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning experiences by considering how students perceive their own reading strengths and weaknesses.

In summary, the findings suggest that while students generally demonstrate positive perceptions of their reading stamina and strategy use, they continue to face challenges related to reading comprehension, reading accuracy, and metacognitive monitoring. Therefore, future reading instruction should focus not only on improving linguistic skills but also on fostering strategic and self-regulated reading practices.

Conclusion

This study explored eighth-grade students' perceptions of their reading skills through self-assessment across several dimensions, including reading engagement, comprehension, strategy use, self-monitoring, reading stamina, reading accuracy, and reading pace. The findings revealed that students generally held positive perceptions of their reading stamina and their ability to use reading strategies when encountering difficulties. These results suggest that students were willing to engage in reading activities and demonstrated some awareness of strategies that can support comprehension.

Despite these positive perceptions, the findings also identified challenges in reading comprehension, reading accuracy, and self-monitoring. Many students reported difficulties in fully understanding texts, reading words correctly, and monitoring their comprehension through activities such as retelling key information. These areas may require greater instructional attention to help students become more effective readers.

The study highlights the value of self-assessment as a reflective tool that enables students to evaluate their own reading abilities and helps teachers identify areas that need improvement. Based on these findings, teachers are encouraged to incorporate activities that promote reading comprehension, accuracy, and metacognitive awareness. Future research may combine self-assessment with objective measures of reading performance to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' reading skills.

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