# Is There a Relationship between Reception and Production Language Self-Efficacy?

***[1]Ayesya Azreena Mohd Azhar., [2]Nadiah Zubbir., [3]Zaiton Md Isa., [4]Sharifah Nurul Shahirah Syed Roslee., [5]Nurul Fazirah., [6]Noor Hanim Rahmat**

**[1,2,3,6]Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA,Shah Alam, Malaysia**

**[4]Graduate School of Humanities, The University of Osaka, Osaka, Japan**

**[5]School Of Education and Cognitive Science, Asia E University, Malaysia**

***Corresponding Author**

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## ABSTRACT

Learning a foreign language, such as Japanese, presents various challenges, involving psychological and cognitive aspects like self-efficacy and language learning anxiety. Self-efficacy, or the belief that one can complete certain tasks, significantly influences students' motivation and academic performance. Learners' engagement and communication willingness may be lowered by their fear of making mistakes and receiving unfavorable feedback. This study fills a research gap on self-efficacy among Japanese language learners in Malaysia. Investigating how learners perceive their production and reception self-efficacy in learning Japanese, as well as the connection between these two forms of self-efficacy, are the goals of this study. 171 Malaysian students studying Japanese participated in a quantitative survey. The instrument used was a 5-point Likert scale survey that was divided into two main sections: Section C carried 10 items on production self-efficacy (speaking and writing) and Section B had 9 items on reception self-efficacy (reading and listening). The findings show that students believe they are somewhat more capable of receiving than producing. Reception and production self-efficacy are positively and significantly correlated, suggesting that confidence in language comprehension is correlated with confidence in language production. The findings indicate that in order to increase student engagement and academic success in Japanese language instruction, educators and curriculum developers must create strategies that enhance both production and reception self-efficacy while lowering learners' anxiety about learning a new language.

**Keywords:** Self-efficacy, reception self-efficacy, production self-efficacy, Japanese learners, Japanese language

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of Study

Learning the Japanese language can be both rewarding and challenging for foreign language learners. Successful language acquisition is influenced not only by cognitive abilities and instructional methods but also by psychological factors, particularly self-efficacy. According to Barry J. Zimmerman (2000), self-efficacy is associated with key aspects of academic motivation, including learners' choice of activities, the effort they exert, their persistence when facing difficulties, and their emotional responses. Self-efficacy focuses on an individual's perceived capability to perform specific tasks rather than general self-perception. In the context of Japanese language learning, this includes learners' confidence in their ability to read, write, listen, and speak in the target language.

At the same time, previous studies have shown that psychological factors such as fear and anxiety may influence learners' participation and engagement in foreign language learning. Özdemir and Seçkin (2025) explained that

fear of making pronunciation mistakes, speaking in public, and receiving negative evaluation can lead learners to feel anxious and reluctant to participate in classroom activities. These emotional responses may reduce learners' willingness to communicate and hinder their overall learning experience. However, although anxiety is acknowledged as a contributing factor, this study focuses specifically on self-efficacy as a key determinant of learners' perceived ability in language learning.

Previous research has often examined self-efficacy alongside foreign language anxiety and found that these factors are related. For instance, Libratar et al. (2025) reported that lower confidence in speaking ability is associated with higher levels of fear among learners, while Okyar (2023) identified a negative relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and self-efficacy. These findings suggest that psychological factors play an important role in shaping learners' language learning experiences. Nevertheless, to ensure conceptual clarity and alignment with the study design, the present study concentrates specifically on self-efficacy rather than examining anxiety as a measured variable.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate learners' perception of reception and production self-efficacy in Japanese language learning, as well as the relationship between these two constructs. By focusing on self-efficacy across different language skills, this study seeks to provide clearer insights into how learners evaluate their abilities and how these perceptions can inform more effective teaching and learning strategies.

**Statement of Problem**

Many learners of Japanese as a foreign language continue to face challenges in developing confidence across different language skills, despite the increasing emphasis on foreign language education. One of the key factors influencing this issue is self-efficacy, which plays a significant role in shaping learners' motivation, engagement, and persistence in language learning tasks. Learners with low self-efficacy tend to doubt their abilities, perceive learning tasks as difficult, and may reduce their effort, ultimately affecting their academic performance and language development (Shen et al., 2023).

Previous studies have highlighted that psychological factors, including self-efficacy and anxiety, influence learners' language learning experiences. For instance, Okyar (2023) and Libratar et al. (2025) suggested that self-efficacy is closely related to learners' emotional responses and confidence in language use. However, most existing studies have primarily focused on English as a foreign language and have been conducted in contexts outside Malaysia. This limits the understanding of how self-efficacy operates among learners of other foreign languages, particularly Japanese, within the Malaysian context.

Furthermore, although previous research has examined self-efficacy in general, limited attention has been given to the distinction between reception and production self-efficacy in language learning. Understanding how learners perceive their abilities in these two domains is important, as each requires different cognitive processes and may influence language performance differently. Without a clear understanding of these distinctions and their relationship, it is challenging for educators to design targeted instructional strategies that effectively support learners' development.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate learners' perceptions of reception and production self-efficacy in Japanese language learning and to examine the relationship between these two constructs. By focusing specifically on self-efficacy, this study seeks to provide more precise insights that can inform teaching practices and contribute to the development of more effective language learning strategies.

**Objective of the Study and Research Questions**

This study is conducted to explore learners' perception of reception and production self-efficacy in language learning. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- How do learners perceive their reception self-efficacy in language learning?
- How do learners perceive their production self-efficacy in language learning?

- Is there a relationship between reception and production language self-efficacy?

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Theoretical Framework of the Study

Theory of Self-Efficacy and Language Learning

Bandura developed the theory of self-efficacy, which explains how individuals' beliefs in their ability to perform actions necessary to achieve specific outcomes influence their choice of tasks, the effort they invest, and their persistence when facing challenges (Bandura, 1977). He argued that stronger perceived self-efficacy leads individuals to apply greater effort and remain committed to achieving their goals (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura (1977) identified four main sources of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments (or mastery experiences), vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and psychological states. Performance accomplishments are beliefs shaped by successful task performance, where repeated success strengthens self-efficacy and repeated failure weakens it. Vicarious experience occurs when individuals observe others, especially those they view as similar to themselves, succeed. As Bandura (1994, p. 2) noted, "The greater the assumed similarity, the more persuasive are the models' successes and failures." Verbal persuasion refers to encouragement or constructive feedback from others, which can strengthen a learner's confidence. In classroom settings, this often takes the form of teacher feedback, whether implicit or explicit (Graham, 2022). Psychological states include emotional and physical conditions, such as stress, anxiety, or fatigue, which may enhance or diminish self-efficacy. For example, positive moods increase self-efficacy while anxiety on the other hand reduces it (Bandura, 1994).

In language learning, these four sources provide a framework for understanding how learners develop confidence in their linguistic abilities. Mastery experiences may come from repeated success in speaking, writing, listening, or reading tasks. Vicarious experiences arise when learners observe peers succeeding in similar tasks. Verbal persuasion occurs when teachers provide targeted positive feedback. Psychological states influence willingness to participate, with lower anxiety and more positive emotions fostering higher self-efficacy.

The applicability of Bandura's self-efficacy theory to language learning is further supported by recent studies. Chao et al. (2018) demonstrated that self-efficacy, along with self-concept, significantly predicts learners' achievement in English and Chinese, indicating that beliefs about one's abilities directly influence language performance. Teng et al. (2018) found strong correlations between writing self-efficacy and motivational beliefs, suggesting that self-efficacy shapes both learners' attitudes and their engagement with language tasks. These findings show that Bandura's framework offers a valuable lens for understanding the psychological factors that influence language learning success.

## Past Studies

Past Studies on Language Self-Efficacy

Numerous past studies have explored the impact of learners' beliefs, motivation and language acquisition outcomes. The study by Anam and Stracke (2020) investigated self-efficacy beliefs in the context of learning English as a foreign language. Their research highlighted that self-efficacy as a motivational factor affecting cognitive and behavioral engagement. The study involved sixth graders from 12 primary schools in East Java, Indonesia, employing a mixed-methods approach that included questionnaires, English proficiency tests administered to 516 participants, and semi-structured interviews with 12 students. The results demonstrated a significant relationship between self-efficacy and language ability, with the qualitative data further supporting that students with different self-efficacy levels exhibited varying cognitive and motivational engagement.

Similarly, Wang et al. (2024) examined how classroom goal structures, self-efficacy, and gender influence student engagement in learning English among college students in China. Using questionnaires completed by 606 students, their analysis via multi-group structural equation modeling revealed that mastery-oriented classroom environments directly and indirectly affected male students' engagement through self-efficacy. For

female students, only the indirect effect via self-efficacy was significant. These results suggest that self-efficacy not only directly influences engagement but also mediates the relationship between classroom goal structures and student engagement across genders. These findings provided empirical evidence of the motivational role of self-efficacy in language learning. The importance of cultivating self-efficacy and designing supportive learning environments, as both are crucial for enhancing motivation, engagement, and language proficiency among diverse learner populations.

**Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. This study investigates the relationship between two types of language self-efficacy, namely reception and production self-efficacy. According to Kutuk et.al (2022), there are two types of language self-efficacy and they are reception and production self-efficacy. The use of reception language is sometimes seen as a passive form of language. The language user is not expected to respond unless asked to (Rahmat, 2020). Reception language efficacy refers to the learners' ability to understand and process the target language. In the context of this study, reception language self-efficacy refers to listening and reading skills.

Next, production language efficacy refers to how well a learner can put together the language learnt. It includes the learners using their ability to communicate their ideas using the target language. In the context of this study, production language efficacy refers to speaking and writing skills. This study also explores the relationship between reception and production language self-efficacy.

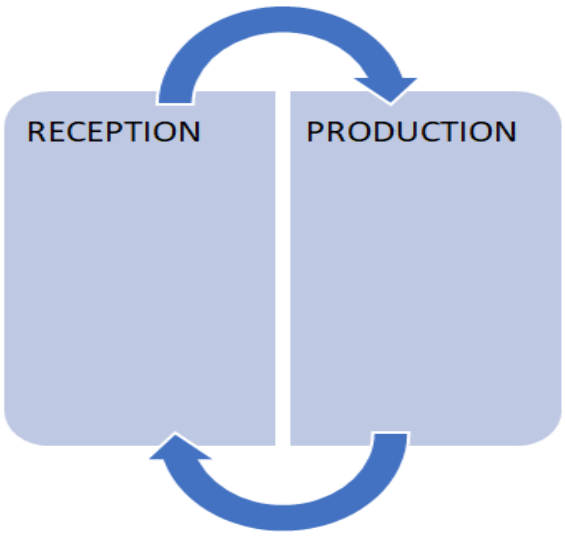


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study Relationship between Reception and Production Self-Efficacy

## METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is done to explore students' perception on reception and production language self-efficacy. A convenient sample of 171 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey. Table 1 below shows the categories used for the Likert scale; 1 is for Never, 2 is for Rarely, 3 is for Sometimes, 4 is for Very Often and 5 is for Always.

Table 1. Likert Scale Categories

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Never |
| 2 | Rarely |
| 3 | Sometimes |

| | |
|---|---|
| 4 | Very Often |
| 5 | Always |

Table 2 shows the distribution of items in the survey. This study is replicated from Kutuk et.al (2022) to reveal the variables in table below. Section B has 9 items on Reception self-efficacy and Section C has 10 items on Production self- efficacy.

Table 2. Distribution of Survey Items and Reliability

| NO | VARIABLE | SUB-CATEGORY | ITEMS | TOTAL ITEMS | CRONBACH α |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | RECEPTION SELF-EFFICACY | Listening | 4 | 9 | .894 |
| | | Reading | 5 | | |
| C | PRODUCTION SELF-EFFICACY | Speaking | 5 | 10 | .936 |
| | | Writing | 5 | | |
| | | | | 19 | .951 |

Table 2 also shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .894 for Reception self-efficacy and .936 for Production self-efficacy. The overall Cronbach alpha for all 19 items is .951; thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen (Jackson, 2015). Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

## FINDINGS

### Demographic Analysis

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Question | Demographic Profile | Categories | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Gender | Male | 49% |
| | | Female | 51% |
| 2 | Self-Rating Japanese Language Proficiency | Can communicate in Japanese | 80% |
| | | Cannot communicate in Japanese | 20% |
| 3 | Cluster | Science & Technology | 62% |
| | | Social Sciences & Humanities | 38% |
| 4 | Mode of Learning Japanese | Formal Education (University) | 88% |
| | | Informal Education (Self-Taught) | 12% |

Table 3 demonstrates the demographic profile of respondents. The sample consisted of 49% male and 51% female. A large majority, 80%, reported the ability to communicate in Japanese, while the remaining 20% were unable to communicate. Regarding academic background, 62% were from Science and Technology and 38%

from Social Sciences and Humanities. In terms of learning mode, 88% learned Japanese through formal university education, whereas 12% were self-taught through informal learning.

## Descriptive Statistics

## Findings for Reception Self-Efficacy

This section presents data to answer research question 1- How do learners perceive their reception self-efficacy in language learning? In the context of this study, this is measured by (i) Listening and (ii )Reading Skills

## Listening

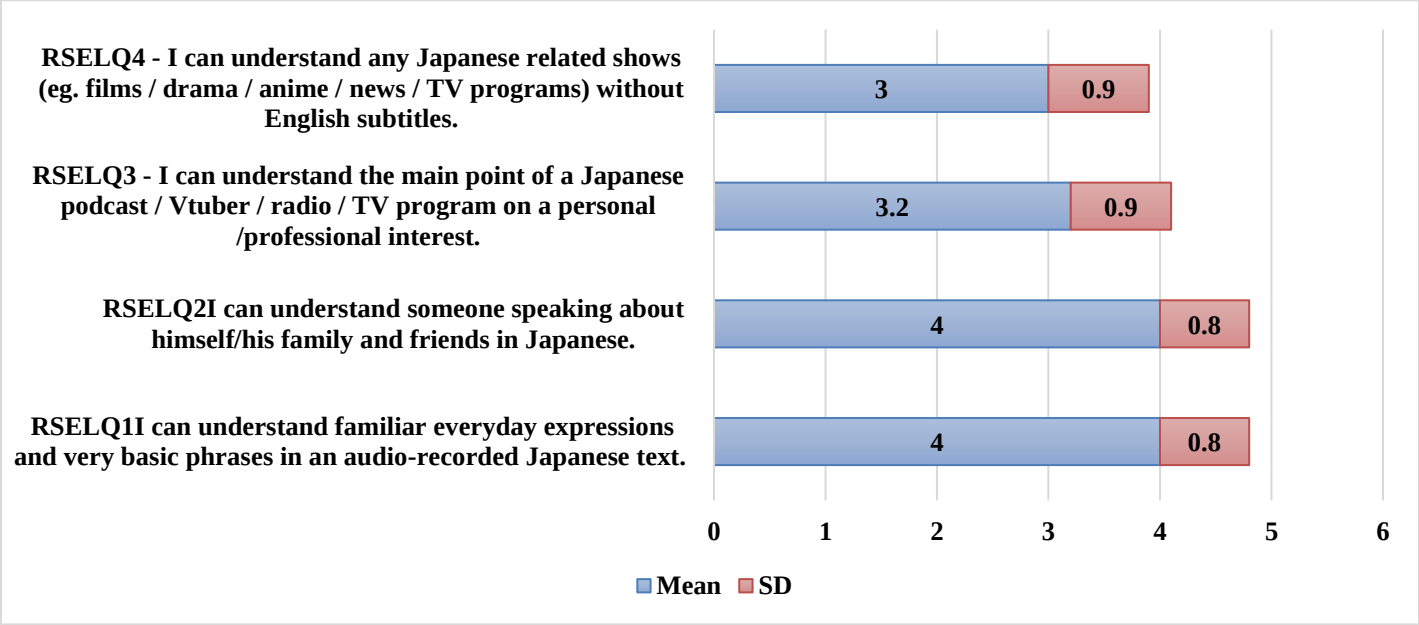


Figure 2. Mean Scores for Listening Skills

Figure 2 shows the mean scores for listening skills. Two items share the highest mean of 4. Item1 (mean=4, SD=0.8) states that learners can understand familiar everyday expressions and basic phrases. Item 2 (mean=4, SD=0.8) states that learners can understand someone speaking about themselves or their family. Next, item 3 (Mean=3.2, SD=0.9) states that learners can understand the main points of a Japanese podcast/ Vtuber / radio / TV program on a personal /professional interest. Lastly, item 4 (mean=3, SD=0.9) states that learners can understand any Japanese related shows.

## Reading

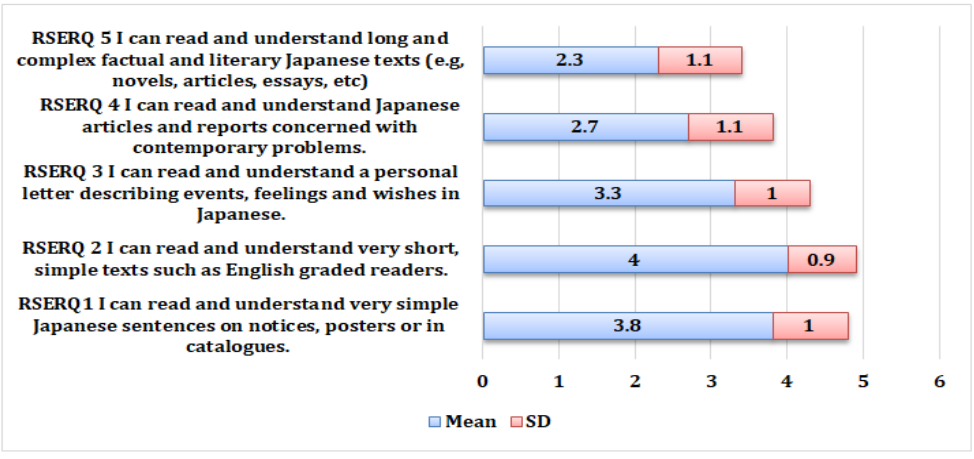


Figure 3. Mean Scores for Reading Skills

Figure 3 demonstrates the means and standard deviation (SD) of how the learners feel about their reading skills. Item RSERQ 2 has the highest mean of 4.0 with SD of 0.9 which states that learners mainly can read and understand very short, simple text, similar to English graded readers. The second highest mean is the item RSERQ1 with 3.8 along with SD of 1.0 which indicates the learners are also confident in reading simple Japanese sentences on notices, posters or in catalogues. The third highest mean is 3.3 together with 1.0 which represents item RSERQ 3. Item RSERQ 3 stated that learners have an average confidence level when it comes to reading Japanese personal letters describing events, feelings and wishes in Japanese. The two lowest mean are item RSERQ 4 (mean = 2.7, SD = 1.1) and RSERQ 5 (mean = 2.3, SD = 1.1) where exhibit learners to have the least confident in reading Japanese articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems as well as long and complex factual and literary Japanese texts (e.g. novels, articles, essays, etc.).

**Findings for Production Self-Efficacy**

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How do learners perceive their production self-efficacy in language learning? In the context of this study, this is measure by (i) Speaking and (ii) Writing skills.

**Speaking**

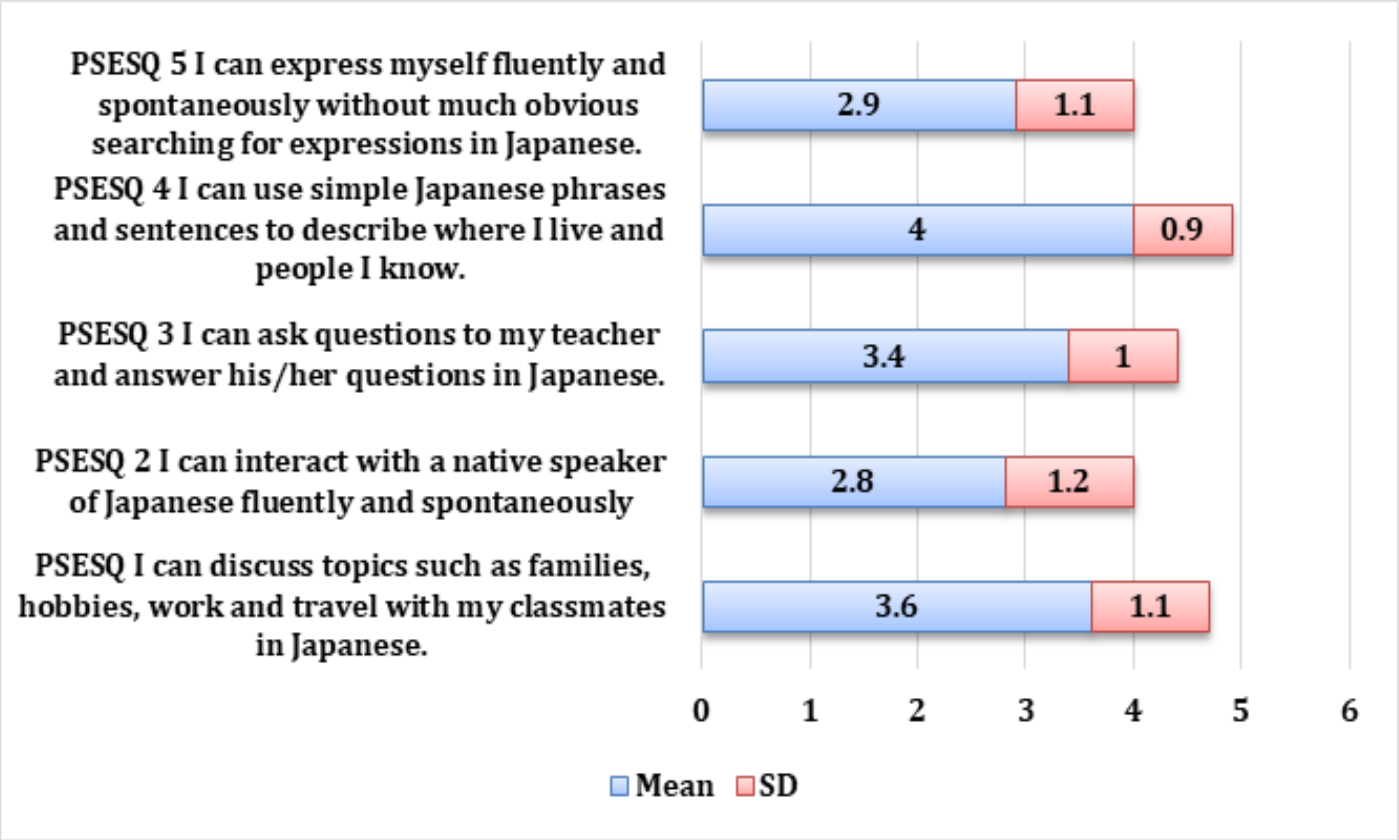


Figure 4. Mean Scores for Speaking Skills

Figure 4 reveals the means and standard deviation (SD) of how the learners feel about their speaking skills. Item PSESQ 4 has the highest mean of 4.0 with SD of 0.9 which states that learners are comfortable in using simple Japanese phrases and sentences to describe their home and people they know. The second highest mean is the item PSESQ 1 with 3.6 along with SD of 1.1 which indicates the learners can discuss topics such as families, hobbies, work and travel with their classmates in Japanese. The third highest mean is 3.4 together with 1.0 which represents item PSESQ 3. Learners are able to ask and answer questions to their teacher in Japanese with confidence. The two lowest mean are item RSERQ 5 (mean = 2.9, SD = 1.1) and RSERQ 2 (mean = 2.8, SD = 1.2) where exhibit learners to have the least confident in expressing themselves freely without much obvious searching for expressions in Japanese as well as interacting with Japanese native speaker fluently and spontaneously.

**Writing**

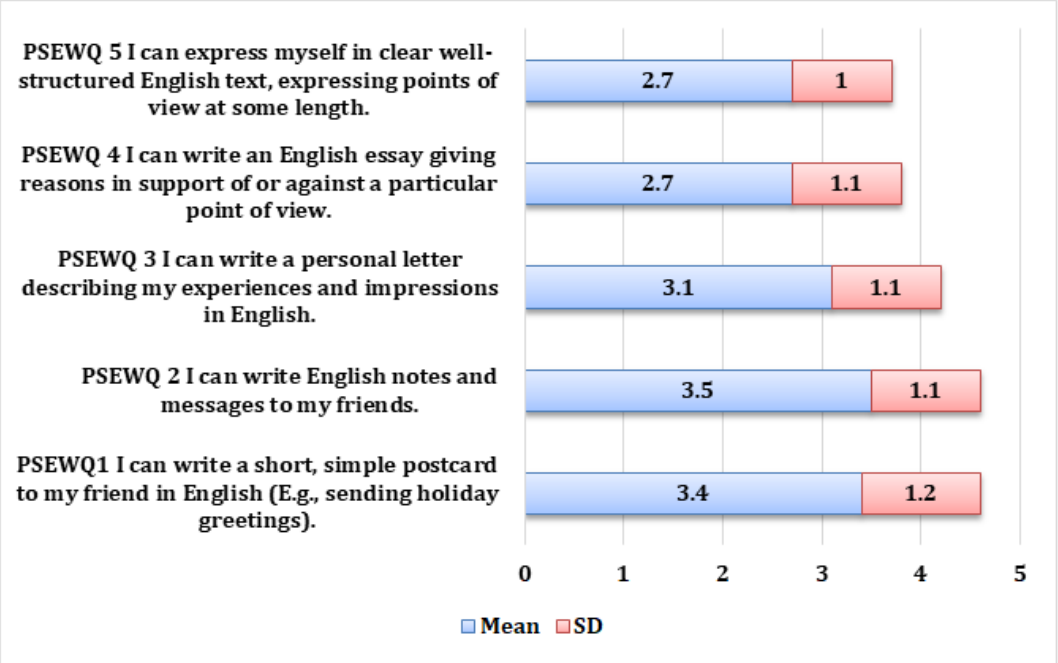


Figure 5. Mean Scores for Writing Skills

Figure 5 provides the mean scores and SDs reflecting how confident learners feel about their writing. Item PSEWQ 2 records the highest mean at 3.5 (SD = 1.1), indicating that learners are most comfortable writing brief notes and messages to friends. The next highest is PSEWQ 1 with a mean of 3.4 (SD = 1.2), showing reasonable confidence in composing short, simple postcards such as holiday greetings. The third highest is PSEWQ 3, mean 3.1 (SD = 1.1), suggesting moderate confidence in writing personal letters that describe experiences and impressions. The two lowest means are PSEWQ 4 (mean = 2.7, SD = 1.1) and PSEWQ 5 (mean = 2.7, SD = 1.0), which indicates that learners feel least confident in producing longer, well-structured texts or argumentative essays presenting reasons for and against a point of view. Overall, the pattern points to greater ease with short functional writing and reduced confidence as task length and structural demands increase.

**Exploratory Statistics**

Findings for Relationship between reception and production language self-efficacy

This section presents data to answer research question 4- Is there a relationship between reception and production language self-efficacy?

To determine if there is a significant association between reception and production self-efficacy, data is analysed using SPSS for correlations.

Table 4. Correlation between Reception and Production Self-Efficacy

| | | RECEPTION | PRODUCTION |
|---|---|---|---|
| RECEPTION | Pearson (Correlation) | 1 | .806** |
| | Sig (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 171 | 171 |
| PRODUCTION | Pearson (Correlation) | .714** | 1 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Sig (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 171 | 171 |

**Correlation is significant at the level 0.01(2-tailed)

Table 4 shows there is an association between reception and production self-efficacy. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between reception and production self-efficacy (r=.806**) and (p < .000). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between reception and production self-efficacy.

# CONCLUSION

## Summary of Findings and Discussions

Answering Research Question 01 - How do learners perceive their reception self-efficacy in language learning? Learners reported higher self-efficacy in reception skills compared to production skills, particularly in understanding familiar expressions and simple written texts. This pattern can be explained by the nature of language acquisition, where comprehension typically develops earlier than production. Reception tasks require recognition and processing, whereas production demands retrieval, formulation, and real-time output, which are cognitively more demanding. From a self-efficacy perspective (Bandura, 1977), learners are more likely to develop confidence in tasks where they experience repeated success. As receptive tasks are generally more accessible at lower proficiency levels, learners accumulate more mastery experiences, leading to higher perceived self-efficacy in listening and reading. This aligns with previous findings by Kutuk et al. (2022) and Zimmerman (2000), which highlight that mastery experiences enhance self-efficacy by reinforcing learners' belief in comprehension skills.

Answering Research Question 02 - In contrast, learners demonstrated lower self-efficacy in production skills, especially in tasks requiring spontaneous interaction and extended writing. This can be attributed to higher performance pressure and fear of making errors, particularly in communicative contexts involving native speakers. Production tasks involve greater linguistic complexity and require active construction of language, which increases cognitive load. This finding aligns with Teng et al. (2018), where self-efficacy varies depending on task complexity and situational demands. It also suggests that limited opportunities for authentic communication and feedback may hinder the development of production self-efficacy among learners. This pattern also aligns with Wang et al. (2024), who demonstrated that self-efficacy fluctuates according to task complexity and is influenced by supportive learning environments.

Answering Research Question 03 - Is there a relationship between reception and production language self-efficacy? A strong positive correlation ($r = .806$, $p < .001$) indicates that learners confident in receptive skills also tend to be confident in productive skills. This finding supports Kutuk et al. (2022), who proposed that reception and production self-efficacy are related, and in line with Bandura's (1977) theory, mastery in one domain can enhance perceived capability in related domains through transfer of confidence. This finding implies that improving receptive skills may indirectly strengthen productive abilities, supporting a pedagogical approach that sequences learning from comprehension to production.

## Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

## Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

The results support Bandura's (1977) theory by demonstrating that proficiency in receptive skills can enhance confidence in productive skills, and conversely. The findings support the framework proposed by Kutuk et al. (2022), indicating that these skills are mutually reinforcing. This emphasizes the significance of interventions

that address both dimensions concurrently, employing mastery experiences, vicarious learning, constructive feedback, and anxiety reduction. Teaching approaches must transition from teacher-centered delivery to include learner-centered methods that enhance self-efficacy through progressive challenges. Scaffolded learning, along with authentic yet attainable tasks and constructive feedback, facilitates the development of competence and confidence in learners. Establishing a low-anxiety classroom environment and promoting peer collaboration can significantly reinforce self-efficacy.

Future research should include quantitative and qualitative methodologies to obtain deeper insights into the evidence of self-efficacy in classroom behavior. Comparing learners with immersion experiences in Japan to those without may clarify the impact of cultural exposure and authentic interaction on the development of both reception and production self-efficacy.

**Pedagogical Implications**

The results suggest that language instruction should strategically leverage receptive skills as a foundation for developing productive skills. Educators should design scaffolded learning experiences that begin with comprehension-based tasks before gradually transitioning to guided and independent production activities. For example, structured listening and reading tasks can be followed by controlled speaking and writing exercises to reduce cognitive load and build confidence progressively. Additionally, creating low-anxiety environments and providing constructive feedback are essential to enhance learners' willingness to engage in production tasks.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research should further investigate how instructional sequencing, particularly from reception to production, influences the development of self-efficacy over time. Longitudinal studies may provide deeper insights into how learners' confidence evolves across different proficiency levels and learning stages. In addition, future research could combine quantitative measures with qualitative approaches, such as interviews or classroom observations, to capture how self-efficacy is reflected in actual learning behaviour. For instance, learners with higher self-efficacy may demonstrate greater participation in classroom interactions or achieve better performance in language assessments, particularly in production-related tasks where confidence is generally lower.

Furthermore, future studies could compare learners with and without immersion experiences in Japan to examine how authentic exposure to the language and interaction with native speakers contribute to the development of both reception and production self-efficacy. Such comparisons would provide valuable insights into the role of mastery experiences and vicarious learning in strengthening learners' confidence.

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