

CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' SELF ESTEEM AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present research is employed to understand the relationship between self esteem and English language proficiency of Indonesian EFL students. The research was conducted on both Indonesian male and female graduate students of English department in a Postgraduate school in Bandung. During the research, questionnaire developed by Hyde (1979 in Bagheri, et al., 2012) was used as the research instrument to obtain the score of students' self esteem. In addition, the data of English proficiency were collected from TOEFL score which has been standardized. Those instruments were administered in two sessions by one week interval. The data were analyzed by Pearson product moment correlation to identify the relationship between two variables. The result of this study showed that the students' self esteem have significantly strong positive correlation with their language proficiency.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, English language proficiency, Postgraduate students

A. Introduction

Self-esteem often has a connection with mentally health, learning successfully, living effectively, and even the good life (Murk, 2006). In the successful learning, Smelser (1989) identified that there are three elements affected by self esteem, namely cognitive, affective, and evaluative elements. The first element (self esteem) which means characterizing some parts of oneself in power, confidence, and agency has a relation with English language proficiency. The above statement is also strengthened by Alwasilah (2010), who stated that students' motivation or self esteem is one of the variables to achieve their success in implementing educational program. The aforementioned statement can be shown when students have good confidence and power or they have ability in English, they will show their ability or positive aspect in holding English proficiency, such as TOEFL, IELTS, or English examinations.

Self esteem impacts on the students' comprehension or proficiency. It can be identified that students with high self esteem usually set higher goals for themselves and become more willing to continue in spite of failure. Furthermore, high self esteem may also help students have the confidence to challenge difficult situations as well as see satisfaction from their progress and success (Murk, 2006). Oden et al (n.d) add that students who are confident in their academic skills believe in high scores of examinations and quality of their work to earn personal and professional benefits. On the other hand, students who lack confidence in their academic skills visualize a low grade even before they start an examination or enroll in a course.

Some research on English language proficiency and self esteem has been conducted by many researchers (Fahim et al., 2012; Hisken, 2011; Bagheri et al., 2012; Oden et al., n.d). Fahim et al (2012) research focus on self esteem and paragraph writing, but they include English language proficiency as their unseen variables in the study. They found that there is a relationship between English language proficiency and self esteem of Iranian EFL

language learners. This study used NashreEbteda version of TOEFL proficiency test (structure and reading sections) and Coopersmith self-esteem questionnaire.

Besides the research mentioned above, self esteem also has positive correlation with English writing and reading achievement in general scope. Al-Hattab's study (2006) showed that the positive correlation emerges from situation and task self esteem with English writing achievement. In contrast, there was not significant correlation between the two variables. Whereas Bagheri et al. (2012) research focused not only on self esteem for reading comprehension but also global, situational, task self esteem and personality toward reading comprehension. They found that self esteem is positively correlated with reading comprehension. The participants of their study were university students. Accordingly, self esteem affect different aspects of learning language skills not only reading but also writing and oral communicative proficiency as has been studied by some researchers (Shumin,1997; Timothy et al., 2001).

Like the aforementioned studies, it is found that most of the studies above focus on the correlation between self esteem and some English skills. However, little attention has been paid to know the association of more than one skill in English language proficiency and self esteem among Indonesian EFL students. Thus, this study aims to investigate the correlation between global self-esteem and English language proficiency (TOEFL) to graduate English students of a postgraduate school in Bandung.

Based on the background above, this research is conducted to answer the following research question: "Is there any significant correlation between global self esteem and English language proficiency?"

B. Literature Review

Self-esteem is defined as the complication of feelings about oneself that guides behavior, influences affective evaluator of individual's evaluator, and drives motivation in learning (Stevick, 1990: 25). Branden (2001) distinguishes self esteem into two aspects, such as self confidence which is the sense of efficacy and self respect which is the sense of worthiness. Frequently, self esteem is interchangeably used with self-concept, self competence, and self-efficacy. Self efficacy as a part of self esteem which means a person's confidence to perform specific task successfully and link closely to initial task engagement, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Branden, 2001). Bandura (1997) adds that self efficacy is conveyed by improved intrinsic motivation, the ability to sustain high levels of motivation and persistence in the face of difficulties and better problem solving.

Accordingly, Burns (1979) asserts that self-esteem is a positive or negative attitude of an individual towards him or herself. It means a person who has high self esteem is confident. People who have low self esteem usually show signs of stress and unhappiness.

Learning environment can be a factor conducive to building students' self esteem since students can socialize with one another. Thus, it helps them become successful and self confident students. In consonance with the above view, Schunk (2000) and Hisken (2011) state that students or individuals with high self esteem are able to successfully complete given tasks academically, whereas others with lower self esteem tend to give up when faced the challenging tasks. This indicates that the people with higher sense of self esteem show persistence and flexibility.

C. Research Methodology

1. Research design

This study employed quantitative research for measuring the data using statistical procedures (Cresswell, 2009). In addition, correlation study was used to determine the degree of relationship between two variables, namely students' self esteem and English proficiency level (Hatch &Farhady, 1982; Coolidge, 2000).

2. Sample

Samples of this research were 40 graduate students of English Education Program in a postgraduate school in Bandung. Among 40 graduate students 85% was female and 15% was male. The samples were selected randomly whether they have conducted TOEFL or not.

3. Research Instruments

To investigate the relationship between self-esteem and English language proficiency two instruments were used. The first one is questionnaire of self-esteem (QSE) by Hyde (1979 in Bagheri et al., 2012) and the second one is TOEFL score. The questionnaire of self esteem contains three sections, however this study only use global self esteem. A section consists of 20 questions with five answer choices (Likert scale ranging one to five). The questionnaires were administered and filled by 40 samples in order to know the students' self esteem. Students' identities were kept confidential without mentioning students' name. Hyde (1979in Bagheri et al., 2012) asserts that the results of the studies concerning of the global self esteem have shown that it is a highly reliable instrument. It was found that Cronbach alpha of the QSE was .89. TOEFL proficiency scores were taken based on the latest students' TOEFL score. The TOEFL scores have been standardized. It was supported by students' statements that they got their TOEFL score from ITP or prediction test.

4. Research Procedure

To encompass the way of this study, several steps were successively taken. Questionnaire of self esteem which has been developed by Hyde (1979 in Bagheri et al., 2012) was administered to 40 graduate students. Therefore, during the administration the participants were inform that their identity will be kept confidential and all required information like how to fill the questionnaire of self esteem was shown in the first page of the questionnaire. The questionnaires also involve part of students' TOEFL score.

After all data gathered, the results of the questionnaire were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation (Hatch &Farhady, 1982; Coolidge, 2000), the formula is shown below:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N(\sum XY) - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[(N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2)][N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

Where:

N : number of pairs of scores

X : level of students' self esteem

Y : students' English language proficiency

$\sum XY$: the sum of the cross products

(Hatch &Farhady, 1982; Coolidge, 2000)

Coolidge (2000) asserted that Pearson product moment correlation is used to measure the strength of a relationship between two continues variables. There are some considerations that the correlation was taken as consideration in this research related to Hatch &Farhady

(1982) and Krenzler&Morsund (1999), such as (1) this research is utilized continues data, (2) the relationship between two variables are linear, (3) the scores of both variables are independent of each other.

Having obtained the result of correlation (r), t distribution test was computed to obtain whether the coefficient correlation is equal to zero or not (Coolidge, 2000). The formula of t distribution test:

$$t = \frac{r}{\sqrt{\frac{1 - r^2}{N - 2}}}$$

Where:

- N : number of pairs of scores
- r : correlation coefficient

Thus, the t distribution test was used to test the significance of the correlation coefficient in this research.

D. Findings and Discussion

After conducting all research procedures, some findings related to the research questions were found. Hatch &Farhady (1982) stated that the data were distributed normally when the number of cases is 30 or more ($N = 40$) and distributed randomly or without purposive sampling. For that reasons, the data in this study were categorized as the normal data. Having decided the data were distributed normally, the researcher computed the correlation between two variables using Pearson’s product moment correlation.

The result of the computation shows $r_{xy} = 0.503$ ($-1 < 0.503 < +1$). It indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between students’ self esteem and their English language proficiency (TOEFL score). Thus, the higher number of total students’ self esteem, the higher TOEFL score obtained by the students. Moreover, the lower number of total students’ self esteem scores, the lower TOEFL score gained by the students.

After the value r was obtained, the t test was then calculated to determine the significance of the correlation coefficient using t test formula below with level of sig. alpha = 0.05. The hypothesis of this test is H_0 equals with there is no significant correlation between students’ global self esteem and their English language proficiency.

Based on statistical analysis, the observed t value was 3.59. Based on the table of t distribution (Coolidge, 2000: 276) for a two tailed test of significance at level of sig. alpha = 0.05 with $df = 38$, the critical t value obtained 2.021. It showed that $t_{obt} = 3.59$ is higher than $t_{crit} = 2.021$, the null hypothesis is rejected, and $r = .503$ indicates a significant relationship. Therefore, there was a strong positive correlation between students’ self esteem and their English language proficiency. As a result, the correlation was statistically significant, $r(38) = 0.503$, $p > 0.05$.

According to the aforementioned findings, that was in line with the previous research conducted by Fahim et al. (2011) which showed that there is a positive relationship between English language proficiency, self esteem, and also paragraph writing. It is supported by Schunk (2000) and Hisken (2011) that students or individuals with high self esteem are able to successfully complete given tasks in academic whereas others with lower self esteem tend to become give up when faced the tasks.

Based on the result of self esteem questionnaires, almost all students, who have high score in TOEFL, showed that they have good self esteem in handling English proficiency test. It can be emphasized that they did not give up easily when they face any difficulty, in this term they did not give up when finished their English proficiency test. Bandura (1997) added that self efficacy is conveyed by improved intrinsic motivation, the ability to sustain high levels of motivation and persistence in the face of difficulties and better problem solving. Second, they did not blame themselves a lot when they make a mistake. Third, they were confident with what they are doing. That was in line with Murk (2006) and Oden et al. (n.d) statement that high self esteem may also help students to have the confidence to challenge difficult situations as well as find satisfaction from their progress and success. Thus the last result, they felt satisfied with their abilities no matter how effort they apply.

E. Conclusion

Self esteem was found as the important factor which influences students' performance or ability in mastering a language. Besides the implementation of self esteem to several language skills, such as reading, speaking, and writing (see background), it also played a considerable role in English language proficiency holistically. This study showed strong positive relationship between the students' self esteem and their English language proficiency. The study discovered that the null hypothesis is rejected. On the other hand, in rising up students' English proficiency score (TOEFL, IELTS, TOIEC), teacher should take students' English self esteem as the consideration. Graduate students who have low self esteem should be trained to overcome their negative feelings about themselves and look positively at their EFL proficiency or learning capabilities. This study still has several limitations as the recommendation for further researcher. Firstly, gender of the students was not taken into account in terms of being male or female. Secondly, this study is not done on a large group. Therefore, further researcher can carry out with different form of research in large group or regard to speaking skill or others.

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