

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF ESTEEM AND READING ABILITY OF INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present study is employed to understand the relationship between self esteem and reading ability of Indonesian EFL students. The study 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 reading score were collected from TOEFL score which has been standardized. Those instruments were administered in one session. The data were analyzed by Pearson moment correlation to identify the relationship between two variables. The result of this study showed that the null hypothesis of this study is rejected. Sincethe probability value of students' self esteem is lower than the level of significant (.697>0.05). It indicates that there is a correlation between self esteemand students' reading ability.

*Keywords:* Self-Esteem , reading Ability

### **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 of 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 one self in power, confidence, and agency has a relation with reading ability. The above statement is also strengthened by Alwasilah that students' motivation or self esteem is one of the variables to achieve their success in implementing educational program (2010).

Reading is the most widely employed skill in the literate society for studying, creating awareness, building future environment, and utilizing as media to have recreation (Grigg and Mann, 2008). Reading also can determine as the important skill to help students grab their success individually in their studies (Hermida, 2009). One of the purpose of people read is they want to comprehend the materials which they have read. As Coiro (2008) states that the primary goal of reading comprehension is concurrently process of extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. This process will help reader to get ideas, relate them to experience, organize ideas, or evaluate and utilize ideas.

Furthermore, Bagheri&Faghih (2012) suggest that there are two important factors which influence reading comprehension process namely the reader variable and

the text variable. Readers' variables are the approaches used by readers, motivation, personality, their background knowledge, sex, and self esteem. The importance of these factors has been chosen as the interest in language learning, due to the high effect on learning a foreign or a second language.

In line with the previous statement, self esteem gives impact to 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 the case 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 high scores on examinations and quality of their work to earn personal and professional benefits. In another side, students who lack of confidence in their academic skills visualize a low grade even before they start an examination or enroll in a course.

Several researches regarding reading comprehension and self esteem have been conducted by many researchers (Hisken, 2011; Bagreri&Faghih, 2012; Oden *et al.*, n.d). Bagreri&Faghih (2012) study focus on not only one self esteem to 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 they study were university students.

Therefore, Hisken (2011) examines the correlation between self esteem of students toward their reading ability, reading level, and academic achievement. This study was completed using the University of Central Missouri library and online databases to gather articles and previous research on the areas of self-esteem, reading ability, reading level, and academic achievement. The research showed that there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and reading ability, reading level, and academic achievement. Students' levels of self-esteem were positively impacted if they were successful in reading and other academics.

Besides the study mentioned above, self esteem also has positive correlation with English writing achievement in general scope (Al-Hattab, 2006). This study showed that the positive correlation emerges from situational and task self esteem with English writing achievement, in contrast there was a non significant correlation between the two variables.

As 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 relationship between the association of specific reading skill and self esteem among Indonesian EFL students. Thus, this study aims to investigate the correlation between task self-esteem and students' reading ability to graduate English students of a postgraduate school in Bandung.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Theoretical perspectives and concepts of self esteem**

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). 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 used in several terms or literature synonymous namely self concept, self competence, and self efficacy. Self efficacy as a part of self esteem which means a person 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 reveals that a person is insecure, lacking in confidence and self critical. People who have low self esteem usually show signs of stress and unhappiness.

Learning environment can be a factor in building a students' self esteem since students can connect each others. Thus, it helps them become successful and self confidence 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 in academic whereas others with lower self esteem tend to become give up when faced the tasks. This indicates that the people with higher sense of self esteem are showed persistence and flexibility.

### **2. Research problem**

Based on the background above, this research is conducted to answer the research problem about:

“Is there any significant correlation between task self esteem and students' reading ability?”

### **3. Hypothesis**

In line with the research question, it was hypothesized that:

H<sub>0</sub> : There is no significant correlation between students' task self esteem and their reading ability.

## **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 students' reading ability (Hatch & Farhady, 1982; Coolidge, 2000).

## 2. Data collection

### a. 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.

### b. Research Instruments

To investigate the relationship between self-esteem and reading ability 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 reading score of TOEFL. The questionnaire of self esteem contains three sections, however this study only use task self esteem. A section consists of 20 questions with five answer choices (Likert scale ranging one to five, see appendix). The questionnaires were administered and filled by 40 samples in order to know the students' self esteem. Students' identities were kept confidential without mentioned students' name. Hyde (1979 in Bagheri *et al.*, 2012) asserts that the results of the studies concerning of the task self esteem have shown that it is a highly reliable instrument. It was found that Cronbach alpha of the QSE was .89. Reading 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.

### c. 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, especially reading score. After all data gathered, the results of the questionnaire were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation, the formula is shown below:

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

$X$  : 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

(Coolidge, 2000)

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

#### D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

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 as described in the following.

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

$$r_{xy} = \frac{40(149409) - (2691)(2207)}{\sqrt{[(40 \times 182937 - (2691)^2)][40 \times 122713 - (2207)^2]}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{37323}{\sqrt{[75999][37671]}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{37323}{\sqrt{2862958329}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{37323}{53506.6}$$

$$r_{xy} = 0.69754$$

$$r_{xy} = 0.697$$

The above result of the computation shows  $r_{xy} = 0.697$  ( $-1 < 0.697 < +1$ ). It indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between students' self esteem and their reading ability. Thus, the higher number of total students' self esteem, the higher reading score obtained by the students. Moreover, the lower number of total students' self esteem, the lower reading 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.

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

The hypothesis of this test is:

$H_0$ : There is no significant correlation between students' task self esteem and their reading ability.

To obtain  $r$  is significantly differs from zero, the  $t$  test was calculated below:

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

$$t = \frac{0.697}{\sqrt{\frac{1-(0.697)^2}{40-2}}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.697}{\sqrt{\frac{0.514}{38}}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.697}{\sqrt{\frac{1-0.486}{38}}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.697}{\sqrt{0.01353}}$$

$$t = \frac{0.697}{0.116}$$

$$t = 6.01$$

The score of  $t$  test obtained  $t = 6.01$ . Based on the table of  $t$  distribution (Coolidge, 2000) for a two tailed test of significance at level of sig. alpha = 0.05 with  $df = 38$ , the critical values obtained 2.021. It showed that  $t_{obt} = 6.01$  is higher than  $t_{crit} = 2.021$ , the null hypothesis is rejected, and  $r = .697$  indicates a significant relationship. Therefore, there was a strong positive correlation between students' self esteem and their reading ability. As a result, the correlation was statistically significant,  $r(38) = 0.697$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

According to the aforementioned findings, that was in line with the previous research conducted by Hisken (2011) which showed that there is a correlation between self esteem of students toward their reading ability, reading level, and academic achievement. Students' levels of self-esteem were positively impacted if they were successful in reading and other academics. 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 questionnaire, almost all students who have high score in reading score of TOEFL showed that they have good self esteem in handling reading test. It can be emphasized that they did not easy to give up when they face any difficulty, in this term they did not give up when finished their reading 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. It played a considerable role in reading ability. This study showed strong positive relationship between the students' self esteem and their reading ability. The study discovered that the null hypothesis is rejected. On the other hand, in rising up students' reading score, 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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