

## **ROLE OF SELF-ESTEEM IN SECOND LANGUAGE ORAL AND WRITTEN PERFORMANCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The current study attempts to examine the effect of the level of learner's self-esteem in second language oral and written production. To be more precise, it investigates how do low and high level of self-esteem influence on the productive skills of learners as a personal factor and to raise teachers' awareness about the importance of self-esteem in the success of learners' speaking skill. This research work is based on the hypothesis if learners have a high level of self-esteem, they will be able to trust their own abilities which in turn will increase their level of oral skill production. The most suitable method to this study will be comparative analytical method in order to demonstrate differences between low self-esteem and high self-esteem in oral and written language production before and after feedback by the teacher. This study mainly based on questionnaire, two different types of class project results. The analysis of the questionnaires' results revealed that both teachers and learners strongly support the importance of self-esteem as an affective factor in improving the oral production performance.

**KEYWORDS:** Self-esteem, self-efficacy, learning environment, academic achievement.

### **INTRODUCTION**

James (1890), White (1959), and Rosenberg (1965) have been the main contributors to the development of the theoretical concept of self-esteem. Basically, their definitions point to six major components or dimensions of self-esteem: competence and worthiness; cognition and affect; stability and openness.

We have truly come a long way from the early years of language aptitude research when the likelihood for success in language learning was conceived of primarily in cognitive terms. At this moment in language teaching history, the role of affective variables and the necessity of focusing on the emotional states of learners are readily acknowledged by the language teaching community. As this volume clearly attests, this understanding of the emotional vulnerability of language learners is shared by many language teachers and researchers around the world.

### **SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-EFFICACY**

One of the primary affective elements is self-efficacy. It is important, here, to understand the distinction between self-efficacy and self-esteem. Self-esteem is the person's feeling of his/her self-worth, whereas self-efficacy refers to the person's belief of his or her ability to reach a goal. This feeling comes from the low self-esteem they have. Someone with low self-esteem is believed to be unconfident, while confidence is strongly needed by learners to present their English orally. For Amato (2000), self-esteem is a very important factor in providing learners with the power to be motivated towards their own abilities to enjoy the learning process and experience real communication. Gardner (1994) argued that students cannot defeat the fear that faces them in speaking the foreign language in the classroom. The problem we are confronted with in this research is the kind of relationship between learners' self-esteem and their speaking skills.

Self-esteem has been long the focus of study among educators, psychologists, sociologists and linguists. Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) accounts for more than 12,000 entries related to the areas such as self-esteem, self-perception, self-concept and self-image whereas the American Psychological Association (Psy-CINFO) enlists over 92,000 entries of the same areas, among which 143 entries are entitled purely as self-esteem in relation with second language acquisition. Self-esteem is one of the fundamental individual's affective characteristics in educational psychology, yet no adequate works have been produced to it in SLA field. This might be since self-esteem is closely related to the concept of self-confidence, which has been vigorously reflected in Applied Linguistics with respect to second language acquisition. Certainly

self-confidence and self-esteem shares a mutual emphasis on individual beliefs in evaluating own attributes and abilities as a worthy individual person. In Brown's view self-esteem is probably the most persistent aspect of any human behavior, however Carver et al.; termed self-esteem as an evaluative quality of one's self-image and self-concept.

### **SELF-ESTEEM AND THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

Arnold (1999) and many other researchers refer to the importance of affect in the language classroom. Language learning is an anxiety-provoking experience for many students. As Horwitz et al (1991, 31) note, The importance of the disparity between the "true" self as known to the language learner and the more limited self as can be presented at any given moment in the foreign language would seem to distinguish foreign language anxiety from other academic anxieties such as those associated with mathematics or science. Probably no other field of study implicates self-concept and self-expression to the degree that language study does.

Self-esteem is one of the central drives in human beings. When the level of self-esteem is low, the psychological homeostasis is unbalanced, creating insecurity, fear, social distance and other negative situations. Self-esteem can exercise a determining influence on a person's life, for good or bad; when there is very low self-esteem, this may even bring about a need for clinical treatment. However, though in the context of language learning low self-esteem is a non-clinical phenomenon, it can have serious consequences. Students may avoid taking the necessary risks to acquire communicative competence in the target language; they may feel deeply insecure and even drop out of the class. Three levels of self-esteem have been described in the literature to capture its multi dimensions, namely, global, situational and task self-esteem. It is a quite fixed and steady characteristic in grown up people, it does not change over time except through wide treatment. It is considered as the examiner of one's own value across both time and discriminate situations. It refers to one's judgment of the value in his life as social interaction, work, education, home, or any certain relatively discretely defined traits such as intelligence, communicative ability, athletic ability, or personality traits like gregariousness, empathy, and flexibility to the circumstances and the particular qualities of personalities. Task self-esteem is referred to it because it is connected to specific or particular tasks in particular circumstances. In scholar education, for example, task self-esteem is related to one side of subject-matter, or in athletic situations, a certain skill of sport is assessed in relation to task self-esteem. All in all, self-esteem is proved through its levels and definitions that it has the most powerful impact on learners' results and it is in the learners' hands to be excellent or the reverse due to their feeling towards their capacities.

Every individual has a self-concept though he may find it difficult to accurately describe his self-concept. Individuality is a combination of self-concept i.e., the way one would see his self and his personality. Self-concept is related to one's self-esteem and unless a sense of self-esteem is developed, an individual is unable to progress toward what Maslow calls self-actualization (Ritak, 2000).

Arnold (1999), claims that there are different types of selves such as actual self, possible self, ought self and ideal self. Defining Self-esteem becomes a complex variable if an attempt is made to differentiate between these varieties of self since self-esteem as a variable possibly may fluctuate depending on which self-function serves as a reference point for valuation. Therefore, a same individual can simultaneously hold high, moderate or low levels of different types of self-esteem.

Brown (1994) offers a wealth of discussion about various closely related affective variables including self-esteem, self-concept, self-image, self-confidence, anxiety, willingness to communicate, language ego and integrative motivation in the history language learning and pedagogy. Negative behaviour stimulates learner's low expectations and every failure is seen by them as a confirmation of their low expectations and previous negative perceived self. Similarly, Deutsch & Solomon (1959) found that a negative valuation of self by others might be more satisfactory for an individual having low self-esteem than a high appraisal. Arnold (1999) advocates the need for self-acceptance a highest human priority, in the light of motivation theory. Brown (1994) studying self-esteem also explored concluded that self-belief and self- image tends to play a critical role in guiding and regulating one's behavior. Therefore he suggests that limited perceived beliefs can be reformed with the help of mental imagery as human feelings are closely related to their mental images including self-image.

If learners visualize themselves performing a language task successfully e.g. speaking a target language fluently and interactively, this strong mental image would help him in reducing negative beliefs and affirmative starting point in real learning situation. In the context of language learning, Dornyei (2006) implies the same notion of “ideal selves” by coining the term as “Ideal L2 Self”. As stated by him it is crucial for every learner to reduce the difference between actual-self and ideal-self. Ideal L2 Self is a powerful motivator in second language learning. Throwing light upon all these valuable studies, Arnold (1999) emphasis that focusing our attention on learners’ self-esteem in a language class room may contribute to direct learners’ energy towards productive language acquisition which they in particular circumstances consume in nonproductive identity beliefs making them divert from learning tasks and opportunities.

Norgueras & Rosa (1996) explored the relation among self-esteem, self-evaluation and oral communicative language proficiency in ESL classroom at University of Puerto Rico. This research was based on three years descriptive case study of the first-year students in one of the campus in that university. Krashen’s Affective filter hypothesis served as theoretical foundation for the study. For the first variable i.e., oral proficiency in English language, Norgueras & Rosa (1996) selected an adopted version of Bachman-palmer oral interview test while on the other hand Ramos-Perea self-report self-esteem instrument and self-esteem instrument were chosen for the second variable. Statistical outcomes computed with the help of Pearson Product Moment Correlation to express all potential pairing of the relationships amongst the learners’ self-esteem in the ESL setting with levels of their oral proficiency indicated insignificance of the relation but the qualitative analysis of the data obtained through self-esteem instrument revealed that learners with positive self-esteem scored high oral ESL proficiency. Besides the dissimilar outcomes in two different paradigms, it was concluded too that language learning environment in ESL classroom likewise influenced learners’ variant levels of self-esteem. These results determined that learners though have high self-esteem, yet they may possibly have different levels of self-esteem due to different language learning environments.

Speaking and listening are the two collaborative Language skills. Where several studies have affirmed the significance of listening comprehension in authentic put for speech production, there many of them also have suggested that better input-output results cannot be attained without cautious attention to psychological factors, due to which learners usually scores variedly regardless of their expected grades and self-esteem is one of the overpowering issue concerning these variations. Self-esteem and language learning in real situations are positively correlated where the strength of one variable directly affects and influences the other one. In the light of these deliberations, emotions and psychological factors have more influence on female learners than males and those females with high self-esteem tend to show better performance in learning tasks as compared to male learners (Brown, 1994).

A relationship existing among all three types of self-esteem with oral proficiency; primarily task self-esteem was highly correlated to L2 oral communicative language proficiency. She hence agreed with Brown (1994) views that oral performance is strongly influenced by learners’ global and task self-esteem. All the Affective factors related to motivation such as defense mechanisms, anxiety, internal attitudes, self-esteem, self-regulation, self-management, beliefs and emotional intelligence play an essential role in stimulating or preventing learners’ autonomy. Like students differ, teachers too vary in their teaching style, and preferred strategies. Brown (1994) concludes that enabling learners to acquire as much as they can, it is indeed necessary to provide them with assistance, involving a program would help them to continue their learning process in a relatively stress-free and untroubled manner. This implies a meaning that providing learners with opportunity to learn in their preferred styles, instead of always outside of them would likely help the students but sometimes also help teachers in understanding the difference between a learner’s and a teacher’s preferences. He suggests that still much research remains to be done on the issues such as how individual differences play out at the highest levels of proficiency and in what are the ways in which teachers as well as program administrators could be trained in order to make healthier use of learners’ individual differences.

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