

SELF-CONCEPT AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS: A FOCUS AMONG UTM FINAL YEAR TESL STUDENTS

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Abstract: The purposes of this study were to identify the levels of communication skills and the levels of self-concept among the UTM final year TESL students as well as to identify the relationship between these two variables. The scope of the communication skills was based on the skills evident during the MUET speaking examination. Five components were used for the self-concept variables namely physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self and lastly social self. The sample consisted of 33 final year TESL students from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia where two instruments were used to measure their levels of communication skills and their levels of self-concept. MUET speaking skill scores were used to measure the respondents' levels of communication skills while Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test (1965) was used to measure their levels of self-concept. A number of statistical analyses were employed in order to analyze the data including descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation. From this research it was found that the majority of the final year TESL students possess high level of communication skills and high level of self-concept. The Pearson correlation revealed that there was no significant correlation between the respondents' self-concept and communication skills. In conclusion, this research investigates the influence of self-concept in the final year TESL students' communication skills.

Abstrak: Tujuan penyelidikan ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengenalpasti tahap kemahiran komunikasi dan tahap konsep sendiri dikalangan pelajar tahun akhir jurusan TESL di Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Penyelidikan ini juga dijalankan bagi mengenalpasti hubungan di antara dua pemboleh ubah ini. Bagi kemahiran komunikasi, skop penyelidikan adalah tertakluk kepada kemahiran komunikasi yang diuji ketika peperiksaan lisan MUET. Bagi konsep sendiri, komponen yang terlibat ialah fizikal, moral, pesonaliti, keluarga dan juga sosial. Sampel yang terlibat terdiri daripada 33 orang pelajar tahun akhir dari jurusan TESL. Dua alat penyelidikan digunakan iaitu markah ujian lisan MUET dan juga Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test (1965). Bagi mengenalpasti tahap kemahiran komunikasi pelajar, markah ujian lisan MUET telah digunakan dan bagi mengenalpasti tahap konsep sendiri pelajar Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test telah digunakan. Beberapa kaedah analisis statistik telah digunakan bagi menganalisis data antaranya ialah statistik diskriptif, Pearson correlation dan ujian ANOVA satu hala. Melalui analisis yang dijalankan, didapati kebanyakan pelajar tahun akhir jurusan TESL dari UTM memiliki tahap komunikasi yang cemerlang dan juga tahap konsep sendiri yang tinggi. Walaubagaimanapun, didapati tidak terdapat perhubungan yang signifikan di antara konsep sendiri dan kemahiran komunikasi pelajar tahun akhir jurusan TESL. Kesimpulannya, penyelidikan ini menyiasat tentang pengaruh konsep sendiri terhadap tahap komunikasi pelajar tahun akhir jurusan TESL.

Keyword: communication skills, self-concept

Introduction

Communication and self-concept are very much related to one another as they affect each other. According to Wahlstrom (1992:46) "self-concepts are developed through communication. Self-knowledge is not something we are born with; we have to obtain it by observing ourselves and by observing others' behaviour with respect to us. When we interact with other people, we present ourselves to them...Their responses to our messages either support or conflict with the self we have presented."

Therefore, through the socialization and communication process that we have with the people around us especially the ones closest to us such as family, friends and teachers, we develop the overall understanding of who we are as individuals that eventually becomes our self-concept.

Problem Statement

This research investigates the relationship between a target group's self-concept and its communication skills measured through the MUET speaking skills results.

Self-concept and communication skills are dependent on each other. According to Seiler (1996:65) "self-concept is determined by our experiences and communication with others..." On the other hand Seiler (1996:76) has also stated that "our self-concept affects everything we do, especially our communication with others." This proves the interrelated relationship between self-concept and communication skills.

According to Wilmot (1987:61) "each person's view of himself affects his as well as his partner's behaviour." Moreover, Seiler (1996) also stressed that our self concept influences our behaviour or how we present ourselves in front of people. Our behaviour will in turn influence our style of communication with other people. Style of communication is defined as "... the way a person interacts verbally and non-verbally with others or how individuals portray themselves through their communication." (Seiler, 1996:77) Every individual has his or her own style of communication and different style of communication has different impact on the effectiveness of the communication.

In teaching profession, communication becomes the medium to convey information and instruction to the students. Through the process of communication in classroom, students gain the knowledge as well as important information from the teachers. Communication also affects the smoothness of the lesson as communication is the medium where instruction is conveyed. Through communication teacher can take control of the class and ensure that the teaching and learning process takes part smoothly. Therefore, communication is a very important element in teaching and learning process. Since self-concept very much influences communication, this study has focused on the relationship between these two elements. This is done so that teachers' communication skills could be improved through their self-concept. By having healthy self-concept, teachers should be able to improve their ability in communication which will eventually improve their effectiveness in teaching.

As for UTM final year TESL students who will be teachers in future, they need to be aware of the influence of self-concept in their communication ability. This is because, through this awareness, they can improve their self-concept so they will be able to communicate effectively with their students. As emphasized by Seiler (1996:77) "it is generally agreed upon scholars that those with high self-concepts function better in interpersonal situations than do those with low self-concepts." It is the nature of teacher's work to be frequently engaged with interpersonal situations with their students for example while giving them information, explanation, instruction and many more. Therefore, having high self-concept will provide a lot of benefits for teachers in improving the quality of their communication and consequently the effectiveness of their lesson will also be upgraded. Moreover, considering their lack of experience and exposure in classroom, communication anxiety could be one of the barriers that hinder them in producing effective lesson. Therefore, it is best if they are well prepared particularly in the aspect of self-concept so that the issue of communication skills is not a problem in classroom.

In all, the crucial role that communication plays in teaching and learning process makes it very important for teachers particularly future teachers to improve their communication ability. Since self-concept plays a significant role in communication ability, teachers need to have healthy self-concept in order to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning process.

Objectives

Since the main concern of this research is to investigate the relationship between self-concept and communication skills, there are a few objectives to be achieved. The objectives are:

1. to identify the levels of UTM final year TESL students' communication skills through their MUET speaking examination scores.
2. to identify the levels of self-concept among the UTM final year TESL students.
3. to identify the relationship between the final year TESL students' levels of self-concept with their performance in MUET speaking examination (communication skills).

Methodology

Sample

In this research, the selected target population comprises of final year TESL (Teaching English for Second Language) students from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). These TESL students are under the faculty of Education. They are currently going through their fourth-year undergraduate course in order to become English teachers particularly in secondary schools in Malaysia.

There are three male and thirty-three female students altogether in final year TESL course. For this research, the gender factor is not one of the variables and thus both male and female students are combined in one group. These students are between twenty-two to twenty-eight years old. The test is conducted in a class where everyone is present. All of the students are asked to participate in the test.

The reason why these students are selected as the respondents is very much related to the problem background of this research. This research is done on the basis of communicative skills for teachers in classroom and school contexts and the focus is on the relationship between their self-concept and communicative skills. Therefore, these students are selected as the respondents as they will be future teachers who will be using English as the medium for communication later in their work. Since they are young graduates and have lack of experience in classroom communication, this research will benefit them as it can be their source of guidance on the need to improve their communication skills through their self-concept. Therefore, we can say that this research is specifically conducted for this group of students and it does not apply for other students from different course or faculty.

Some considerations have been taken on the basis of selecting the respondents. Final year TESL students are selected as the sample for this research since they are at the end of their undergraduate course and within a year they will be teachers in secondary school. Therefore, this research is very important for them as they need to prepare themselves particularly on the aspect of communication in the classroom. By improving their self-concept, they can aim to be competent communicators although they might have less experience compared to senior teachers. In all, this research is very beneficial and useful for them. Moreover, although this research might also be relevant to other TESL students from the first year until the third year, the researcher has to take into consideration the different background experiences that these students might have particularly pertaining to their education experience and seniority in undergraduate course and thus these might affect their levels of self-concept. Therefore, this research only focuses on one group of respondents which is final year TESL students.

The researcher has also taken into consideration that teachers' communication competency might be improved due to experience. Therefore, final year TESL students are selected as the target group due to their lack of experience in teaching. On the overall, all final year students have gone through three-month teaching experience during their practical teaching but the duration of time is not enough to expose the

students with sufficient experience in classroom communication. Therefore, considering their lack of experience in classroom communication, the researcher has chosen them as the respondents for this research. This research will expose them on the preparation necessary for them as new teachers in school. Therefore, it is hoped that from this research the students are better prepared particularly in the aspect of their self-concept and communication skills.

Due to these reasons only final year TESL students are selected for this research.

Instrument

In this research, the instrument used to measure the final year TESL students' self concept is the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test. It was developed by William H. Fitts in 1965. Although originally the test is intended to be used for mental health problems among psychiatric patients, the scale is also useful for other purposes such as clinical assessment and diagnosis, counseling, research in behavioral science and personnel selection (Fitts, 1965). The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale actually comes in two forms. They are the Counselling Form and Clinical and Research Form (Fitts,1965). For the purpose of this research only the Counseling Form is used.

In this test, there are one-hundred self-descriptive items which reflect how an individual sees himself or herself, as well as the overall feeling of self-worth, self-image and self-esteem. There are five external aspects of self-concept measured in this test namely moral-ethical, social, personal, physical and family (Fitts, 1965). There are one hundred self-descriptive items consist of forty-five positive items, forty-five negative items and ten self criticism scale items (Torruellas-Caceres, 1997). These different aspects in Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test will ensure that the target respondents' self-concept is measured completely without any preferences on certain aspects. Therefore, this will increase the validity of this research.

The reason why this test is used as one of the instruments in this research is due to its validity. In order to make this test valid and useful, two considerations have been taken into accounts which are the correlation with other personality measures and personality changes under particular conditions. According to Torruellas-Caceres (1997:51) "the correlations with other measures are assessed by determining the correspondence between scores on the Scale and other measures for which correlations should be predicted such as: the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Edwards Personal Preference Schedule and the Inventory of Feelings. The personality changes under particular conditions such as significant life experiences and these experiences can change individual's self-concept, therefore the Scale reflects these changes in predicted ways."

The correlations with other measures will ensure that this test provides valid and trusted information to be used in this research. Besides that, personality changes under particular conditions will guarantee that the aspect of background knowledge and experience are taken into consideration while measuring the final year TESL students' levels of self-concept. Therefore since the respondents' levels of self-concept which are freshly measured are correlated with MUET speaking skills scores taken some time ago, the results will still be valid as the self-concept is measured by taking into consideration the experiences and changes in personality that the respondents have undergone during the duration of their study in UTM. In all, these procedures will ensure that the information in this research is valid and can be trusted.

As stated above, this test measures the external aspects of self-concept where certain components that made up an individual's self-concept are taken into consideration. This will provide more information regarding to the respondents' selfconcept which will increase the usefulness of this research. In Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test, the external aspects included are physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self and social self. This information will provide more understanding to the researcher regarding

to the final year TESL students' self-concept. In all, considering the aspect of validity and usefulness of this test, the researcher has selected this test as the means of measurement in this research.

Besides using Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test, the researcher also uses MUET speaking skill scores as the means to measure the respondents' performance in communication. In MUET speaking examination, there are two components tested which are individual presentation and group discussion. In individual's presentation, the students are given a topic and some time to prepare for the presentation. During the presentation, the students are required to perform certain skills such as conveying facts, explaining, clarifying as well as giving examples. This is performed in front of five listeners namely two examiners and three other students. On the overall, the students are given 4 minutes to prepare and finish their presentation. The procedure in individual's presentation is very much related to the teaching situation in classroom where teachers will have to use their background knowledge on the topics to convey the facts to the students as well as explaining, clarifying and giving examples. The difference is that teachers have to perform these tasks in front of a bigger number of listeners compared to the situation in MUET speaking examination where only five listeners are present. Therefore, the presentation in classroom requires more preparation by the teachers particularly on the aspect of self-concept.

On the other hand, in group discussion similar skills such as conveying facts, explaining and giving examples are needed. However, other additional skills are also required such as taking turns, negotiating meaning and managing discussion. Therefore, on the overall MUET speaking examination tests the students' capability in communicating with other people where the main skills needed such as the skills of conveying facts, explaining, clarifying and giving examples become the main focus. Therefore, this MUET speaking skill scores are the most suitable means of measuring the respondents' communication ability.

However some aspects have been taken into consideration on the selection of this instrument. One of them is due to the fact that there are many factors that can affect the students' performance in MUET examination and one of them is due to the lack of proficiency in English. However, the researcher has taken into consideration that the final year TESL students' level of proficiency during the time MUET test is taken is good and satisfying due to the fact that all of them are accepted as TESL students in University Teknologi Malaysia. Therefore, in other words they are proficient enough in English to be trained as language teachers. Moreover, the Band that these students obtained are between four, five and six which are considered as "competent user", "good user" and "very good user" (refer to Table 2.0). Therefore, on the overall, the issue of lack of proficiency in language is not a problem.

Discussion

Levels of Communication Skills

1. MUET Band

From the findings, it is found that 57.6 percent of the final year TESL students obtained Band 4 in their MUET examination while the rest of them obtained Band 5 which is equivalent to 42.4 percent of the total respondents. Although the percentage of Band 4 respondents is higher than the Band 5 achievers, the difference is not that large where it only amount to 15.2 percent (refer to Table 4.2.1).

According to Malaysian Examination Council (2004) Band 4 achievers are described as "competent user" with "satisfactory command of the language". Their communicative ability is described as "generally expressive and appropriate but with occasional inaccuracies". As for Band 5 achievers, they are described as "good user" with "good command of the language". As for their communicative ability they are described as "expressive, accurate and appropriate but with minor inaccuracies" (refer to Table 2.0).

Based on the final year TESL students' achievement in their MUET examination for all skills, it can be concluded that they possess satisfyingly high proficiency in the language. According to the description by the Malaysian Examination Council (2004), TESL students with Band 4 results possess satisfying range of vocabulary and language structure as they are described as having "satisfactory command of the language". This is emphasized by a statement stating that they are "generally expressive and appropriate but with occasional inaccuracies". This indicates that with the range of vocabulary that they possess, they are able to be expressive in conveying the meanings as they intend to during the examination. This applies to all macro skills tested in the examination namely reading, writing, speaking and listening. However it is important to note that reading and writing skills contribute the highest percentage in MUET overall score where the two skills contribute 70 percent of the total score. Therefore, these students possess sufficient vocabulary and language structure to perform well in these skills.

As for Band 5 students, they possess extensive and wide range of vocabulary and language structure that enable them to be described as having "good command of the language". This is also proven by a statement stating that they are "expressive, accurate and appropriate but with minor inaccuracies". Similar with Band 4 students, they are able to be expressive due to their wide range of vocabulary and language structure. However Band 5 students are described as "accurate" with "minor inaccuracies" compared to Band 4 students who commit "occasional inaccuracies". These criteria differentiate between Band 4 and 5 students. However on the overall it can be generalized that all final year TESL students have sufficient and wide range of vocabulary, language structure as well as knowledge in grammar that allow them to perform well in all macro skills tested particularly reading and writing as these skills contribute to a high percentage in the overall score.

2. Levels of Communication Skills based on MUET Speaking Skill Scores

From the findings, it is found that 87.9 percent of the final year TESL students are categorized as having good communication skills while only 12.1 percent are describes as having average level in their communication skills(refer to Table 4.2.2). Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of final year TESL students are able to communicate well in English.

This is emphasized by the fact that in order to be admitted in UTM TESL course, they have to go through an interview session conducted by two Modern Language Department lecturers under the Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development in UTM. Consequently, this interview session is one of the determining requirements to be accepted in this course besides their matriculation results, SPM English 1119 results as well as their MUET Band. Therefore, it is not surprising if the majority of final year TESL students possess good communication skills as being accepted in TESL course is the testimony of their communicative ability.

For the minority of the respondents who score average in their communication skills during the MUET examination, there might be a few reasons behind this. One of the possible factors might be due to their high level of anxiety during the examination that hinders them from performing well. According to Rosenfeld and Berko (1990) anxiety is common and depends on certain situation such as during examination or during the presentation in front of examiner and audience.

However, Zeuschner (1994) stated that in order to cope with anxiety people should adopt coping strategies where the method usually involves physical and psychological preparation as well as the process of building positive self-image. This shows that positive self-image and positive self-concept can help people to reduce their level of anxiety.

For the majority of the final year TESL students who obtained high score in their MUET speaking examination, one of the main reasons might be due to their high proficiency in English. As discussed

before, all of the final year TESL students possess satisfying and good understanding on sentence structure, vocabulary and grammar rules that enable them to convey the facts clearly as well as expressing their arguments, explanations and elaborations extensively and accurately. These contribute to high scores for both sections tested in the speaking examination. This can be supported by the fact that all of the respondents obtained Band 4 and above in the MUET examination. In all, it can be concluded that the students' knowledge on the language particularly on vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar contribute to their high performance in MUET speaking examination.

According to Wood (1997:17) communication is defined as "...a systemic process in which individuals interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings." Meanings are created and interpreted to allow information to be exchanged. Classroom communication is very crucial as it becomes the medium where information is transferred. Therefore, since the majority of final year TESL students are good communicators, it is hoped that the teaching and learning process can be conducted efficiently. Based on Seiler's (1996) communication model, there are 8 components namely source, message, interference, channel, receiver, feedback, environment and lastly context that made up effective communication. Therefore from these findings, we can conclude that generally the respondents are able to communicate well where all of these components are either consciously or unconsciously being considered while communicating which results in good communication. For example, they are able to decode their meanings into messages accurately as well as communicating appropriately according to the context and environment where the communication occurs. These are all possible due to their sufficient knowledge in the language.

From these findings we can also conclude that UTM final year TESL students possess certain criteria that make them good communicators in English. According to Rosenfeld and Berko(1990), there are 6 qualities of competent communicators namely being appropriate, effective as well as able to adapt based on different situation. The respondents are considered as being effective in their communication as the aims and purpose of the communication are achieved during the examination. This is also due to their high proficiency in the language where their knowledge enables them to convey the meanings as intended by them. Besides that, good communicators are also able to recognize interference and overcome it, understand that no communication is perfect and lastly being ethical. Therefore since the majority of final year TESL students obtain good scores in their MUET speaking examination, this shows that they are competent communicators who are more or less possess the qualities of competent communicator as stated by Rosenfeld and Berko (1990).

Based on the situation in MUET speaking examination, it can also be generalized that the respondents perform well in their interpersonal communication particularly small group communication as well as public communication. In the first component of MUET speaking test, the students have to engage in individual presentation where they have to state the facts, clarify and elaborate on them, giving opinions as well as examples to strengthen the points. 4 minutes are given to them where there will be no interruption from the examiners as well as other test takers. This communication is also called public communication where as defined by Seiler (1996:30) "public communication is the transmission of a message from one person who speaks to a number of individuals who listen." The language used is usually more formal and well organized and this type of communication is most commonly used in classroom where teacher needs to elaborate on the content to the students. Besides individual presentation, group discussion is also present in MUET speaking examination where the skills in individual presentation are still applied besides the group discussion skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents generally perform well in their public communication and group discussion which contribute to their high scores in MUET speaking skill test. Therefore, this shows that there might be possibilities that UTM final year TESL students will also perform well in their classroom communication in future.

Levels of Self-Concept

1. Respondents' Levels of Self-Concept

From the data analyzed, it is found that the majority of the respondents have high self-concept where the percentage is equivalent to 75.7 percent. As for the rest of them, they are categorized under the moderate self-concept where the percentage is 24.3 percent (refer to Table 4.3.1).

Based on Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test which is the instrument used to measure the respondents' levels of self-concept, there are 5 factors or domain specific components that influence the total score of self-concept used in this research. The 5 factors are the physical self, the moral-ethical self, the personal self, the family self and the social self. Naturally, respondents who obtained high score in their self-concept scale test will also have a comparatively high score for each of the factor mentioned. This shows that they are generally satisfied and happy with their physical, moral-ethical, personal, family and social self. This is emphasized by a statement from Toruellas-Caceres (1997:67) stating that respondents who obtain high score in the test "tend to feel they are people of value and worth, have confidence in themselves and act accordingly".

On the other hand, the minority of the respondents who have moderate level of self-concept naturally score a comparatively lower score for each of the factor mentioned above. Therefore, they are generally less satisfied with the aspects of their physical, moral-ethical, personal, family and social self-concept. According to Toruellas-Caceres (1997: 67) "subjects who score low are doubtful about their own worth; see themselves as undesirable; often feel anxious, depressed and unhappy; and have little faith or confidence in themselves". In this research none of the respondents scores low self-concept so this statement does not exactly describe any of the respondents. However, for respondents with moderate self-concept we can conclude that they are situated between the two extremes of high self-concept and low self-concept. Therefore, this group of respondents does not exactly fit the statement for poor self-concept as well as the statement for high self-concept. They can be considered to be situated in between where they do not exactly feel very confident with themselves but at the same time they do not assume themselves as people with no worth at all.

According to Zeuschner (2003: 111), "self-concept is what you believe about yourself. It is your impression, opinion, attitude and description regarding yourself". As for Adler (1996:26) self-concept is described as "a set of relatively stable perceptions each of us holds about ourselves... includes our conception about what is unique about us..." From these definitions, we can conclude that self-concept is the overall understanding of who we are that influences the conceptions of whether we are people of value and worth or vice versa (Toruellas-Caceres,1997). Therefore, for the final year TESL students with high self-concept, we can conclude that they have a high impression on themselves where they see themselves as individuals who are being valued and loved by others due to their approved characteristics or personalities as well as other factors significant such as social and family relationship, moral values and physical characteristics. On the other hand, respondents with moderate self-concept have moderate impressions on themselves where they have the beliefs that there are certain criteria mentioned above that need to be improved in order to be better persons.

Besides the 5 components tested in the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test, there are other factors that influence the formation of the respondents' self-concept. The factors are reflected appraisals, social comparisons and self-perception. For respondents with high self-concept, they perceive themselves as people with value due to the positive feedbacks that they receive through reflected appraisals that enable them to feel superior if compared to other people in social comparisons. As for self-perception, due to these experiences, they develop positive perception regarding to themselves which lead to positive and healthy self-concept. As for respondents with moderate self-concept, through the reflected appraisals,

they might receive some good and bad feedbacks which lead to the mixture inferior and superior social comparisons. On the overall, they might have positive and negative self-perception that contribute to the moderate level of self-concept.

In conclusion, there are many factors that contribute to the development of the final year TESL students' self-concept. These factors are very much related to the background experiences that these respondents have gone through in their lives which make them the persons as they are now.

2. Components of Self –Concept

In order to make this research more complete and useful, besides measuring the general scores of self-concept by the final year TESL students, the domain specific components of self-concept namely physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self and lastly social self are also measured and compared. This will produce a more detailed finding that can contribute to a higher understanding of the research. Besides that Azizi (2008) stated that most research instruments used to measure self concept now cater for domain specific model as well so that certain factors that made up an individual's self-concept can be examined.

The findings reveal the pattern of answers across all of the items ranging from 1 until 90. For the purpose of comparison, the data is analyzed according to their respective component. For the physical self, it is found that the total mean value is 3.1 (refer to Table 4.3.2) which indicates that the respondents do not possess a satisfyingly high self-concept pertaining to the physical aspect. This total mean value reveals that the final year TESL students tend to partly disagree and partly agree with the statements presented in this column. According to the model of self-concept by Seiler (1996), Physical Self-Concept is one of the important components that determine an individual overall self-concept. Based from this model, Physical Self-Concept determines other aspect of self-concept such as Appearance Self-Concept. However, according to the findings, the majority of final year TESL students have high total self-concept (75.7 percent). This shows that compared to other aspects that made up the self-concept such as the family self or the moral-ethical self, Physical Self-Concept does not have a strong effect on the total self-concept of the respondents.

Since the total mean value of 3.1 falls under the category of "Partly False and Partly True" this shows that the respondents are unsure of their answers (Torruellas-Caceres, 1997). This indicates that the respondents might be uncertain with their physical characteristics.

The reason of this might be due to the fact that our physical self such as our level of attractiveness is subjective and depends very much on our own perception as well as other people's perception. As stated by Rosenfeld and Berko (1990), we might be sure of certain traits that we have such as the colour of our hair but we are unsure of other more subjective aspects such as our level of attractiveness or whether we are really beautiful or not. This is because, due to the different experiences that we have in our lives, we develop different perceptions on ourselves. Verderber (1975) stated that our perception is influenced by three factors namely our experience, feedback from other people and lastly the role that we choose to play in our society. The first two factors influence the perception that we have on our physical attractiveness as different people have different perception on beauty and therefore we might receive different feedbacks pertaining to our physical self. Due to this reason, the respondents might be uncertain with their answers for questions in physical self. Their uncertainty in this aspect also reduces the influence that it has on their total self-concept.

As mentioned in the Chapter 4, the respondents consist of 32 female and 1 male. The ratio of female to male is very high. So it can be generalized that the majority of the respondents are female. According to Seiler and Beall (2003), women are more concerned with their physical self and generally feel dissatisfied

with the way they look. Therefore, in this research the dissatisfaction with their physical characteristics among the respondents might lead to a low total mean value for this component.

As for the highest total mean value, it is evident under in the family self. The total mean value for this component is 3.8 (refer to Table 4.3.5). This value is very much nearing the value of 4 which shows that the respondents mostly agree with the statements. Therefore, it can be concluded that the final year TESL students have a comparatively high self-concept pertaining to their family self.

The relationship that we have with our family as the people closest to us is very important in determining our self-concept. According to Wood (1997:67) “communication with three kinds of others is especially influential in shaping selfconcept.” The three kinds of others are family members, peers and lastly the society. Through our communication with our family, we receive feedbacks from them that eventually help to form our own perception of ourselves. Close relationship with family members will lead to favourable and positive feedbacks which will eventually help us to develop positive self-concept. This is proven by this research where the majority of the respondents possess high self-concept. Wood (2006) also stated that there are three ways on how our family members contribute in the development of our self-concept namely through direct definition, identity scripts and attachment styles.

Our impression on ourselves is developed through the messages or feedbacks from other people. This is obtained through the process of reflected appraisals. As stated by Hybels (2004:36), “reflected appraisals are the messages we get about ourselves from others.” As emphasized by Wood (1997), the message that we obtain from our family has a strong influence in the development of our self-concept as through this feedback, we form a perception and understanding on ourselves.

This finding can also be supported by a statement from McAuley (1988) where it is stated that the way parents bring up a child very much influences the formation of the child’s self-concept. In other words, the parents’ treatment of the child will determine whether the child will have positive or negative self-concept. This is because parents as well as other significant family members define the child as an individual with certain characteristics (direct definition). Consequently, he or she will become the kind of person as expected from the family members. Although, this impact is the strongest during the early years in our lives, it also affects us in one way or another as we grow up. McAuley (1988) stated that most adults still remember what was being said about them when they were children. This proves the strong impact of our childhood memory in our lives.

In all, it can be concluded that the close relationship that the final year TESL students share with their family members influences the development of healthy selfconcept among them.

3. Openness to Criticism

Based from the data analysis, it is found that the total mean value for the distribution of respondents’ answers ranging from question 91 until 100 is 3.5 (refer to Table 4.3.8).

This value shows that the final year TESL students’ answers for this component fall under the category of “Partly False and Partly True”. However, since the value is nearing 4 which is the category of “Mostly True”, it shows that generally the respondents are partly agree and mostly agree with the negative statements provided in this component. Therefore, from here we can conclude that the respondents are being sufficiently open to criticism and thus they are honest and truthful while doing the test. As stated by Torruelas-Caceres (1997:65) in her research, “individuals who deny most of these statements most often are being defensive and making a deliberate effort to present a favourable picture of themselves. High scores generally indicate a normal, healthy openness and capacity for self-criticism. Low scores indicate defensiveness.” Since the items in the questionnaire touch the personal aspects of the respondents such as

their personality and family relationship, they might feel threaten to expose the real facts about themselves and consequently there might be effort to modify the information in order to make it more impressive. Due to this possibility, the researcher has decided to measure the respondents' level of openness to criticism to identify their level of defensiveness as well as ensuring the validity of the findings.

As stated above, the finding shows that the respondents are not being really defensive as the total mean value suggests that they are partly agree as well as mostly agree with the negative statements provided to them. This might be due to the fact that the researcher has provided a detailed explanation regarding to this research where the importance of honest answers from the respondents are emphasized. Besides that, the researcher has also convinced the respondents that their information will be treated as strictly confidential. Moreover, there are other factors significant such as the close relationship between the respondents and the researcher as classmates as well as the long duration of time where both parties know each other which is approaching 4 years. The sense of trust that exists might be the reason why the respondents are being truthful while answering the questions.

Most importantly, this finding indicates that the respondents' answers for all components can be trusted as they are being honest while completing the questionnaire. Therefore, the total self-concept scores obtained in this research can be said as reflecting the final year TESL students' self-concept in general. In all, this finding can be used to increase the validity of this research as generally the information obtained from the respondents is proven to be true.

4. Self-Concept and Components

These findings reveal the correlation between the respondents' levels of selfconcept with the components that made up the self-concept namely physical self, moralethical self, personal self, family self and social self. In Chapter 4, it is stated that all of the components are significant in the formation of the respondents' self-concept.

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, the 5 components present in the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test are influential in the development of our self-concept. This is because, these components consist of the significant experiences that we have in our lives that contribute to the formation of our self-concept.

For the respondents under the moderate level of self-concept, the lowest score based on the component is evident in personal self where the value is only 57.3 out of a total score of 90 (refer to Table 4.3.9). This shows that the respondents with moderate level of self-concept have low level of personal self.

In the questionnaire, the items generally test the characteristics of the respondents such as cheerful, calm, hateful, smart and etc. Respondents with high level of self-concept tend to agree with all the positive values in their personality while the respondents with moderate self-concept generally disagree or partially agree with the statements.

Although the respondents are not categorized under the low level of self-concept, they possess comparatively lower scores for self-concept compared to the group of respondents with high level of self-concept. From the findings, we can conclude that they possess lower level of self-concept due to their personality factor and vice versa. Rosenfeld and Berko (1990:85) stated that "personality characteristics are the qualities that constitute a person's character and that make him or her distinctive." From here we can say that our personality differentiates us from other people and making us unique individuals with our own strength and weakness. Our personality determines the perception that we form on ourselves which eventually develops into our self-concept. As stated by Adler (1991:26), "self-concept is a set of relatively stable perceptions each of us holds about ourselves...includes our conception about what is

unique about us and what makes us both similar to, and different from, others.” In all, this emphasized that our personal self plays an important role in the formation of our self-concept.

On the other hand, according to Zeuschner (2003:111), “self-concept is what you believe about yourself. It is your impression, opinion, attitude and description regarding yourself. Your self-concept includes your physical, mental and emotional makeup. Selfconcept is the way you identify yourself. All of these factors affect your overall selfconcept and contribute to the formation of your personality and communication style.” This shows that, our self-concept influences the development of our personality. This is proven by this research where the respondents with moderate self-concept score the lowest in term of the personal self (57.3) while the respondents with high self-concept score the second highest for this component (refer to Table 4.3.9) . This indicates that our levels of self-concept influence the development of our personality where positive self-concept results in good personality and vice versa.

According to a statement from Hecht et al. (1993: 47) “identity is formed and shaped through social interaction. Once formed, identity influences the flow of social behaviour and continues to be influenced by social interaction.” This shows a strong interdependent relationship between identity or personal self and social interaction or social self. According to Hetch et al. (1993) identity and social interaction influence each other as social interaction forms identity while identity influences social behaviour. This theory is proven by this research where it is evident that for the respondents with moderate self-concept where their personal self scores the lowest value, their social self also scores the second lowest value. As for the respondents with high self-concept where the personal self scores the second highest value, their social self also scores the third highest value. This indicates that personal self and social self are closely related to one another.

For the group of respondents with high self-concept, the highest score is evident in moral-ethical self (refer to Table 4.3.9). Therefore, we can conclude that respondents with high self-concept usually have high moral-ethical self. The reason of this is because our moral-ethical self determines the value that we assign to our behaviour, decision as well as other aspects in our lives. If we behave according to the ethics or moral value that we believe to be appropriate, we will feel good about ourselves and consequently this will improve our self-concept. As stated by Rosenfeld and Berko (1990: 87) “values reflect the importance you attach to both different ways of behaving...” This shows that our moral-ethical self determines the evaluation of our behaviour or decision and this will lead to a certain perception that we form regarding to ourselves.

This theory is also emphasized by DeVito (2000) in his book where he suggested that our self-concept is formed through our behaviour. In order to identify whether we behave according to our belief on the right moral-ethical value, we interpret and evaluate our behaviour. Therefore, if our behaviour matches our belief on the right value, we will interpret ourselves as doing the right things and consequently we will feel good about ourselves.

Referring to Wood’s (2006) theory of family self where it is stated that our family determines our identity scripts. Identity scripts refer to the roles that are expected from us based on certain values or attributions practiced by our family. So this shows that the stronger and individual’s family self, the stronger the influence of certain values assigned to their roles or behaviour. In this research, as evident in Section 5.2.2: Components of Self-Concept, the highest total mean value based on component refers to the family self where the value is 3.8. This shows that the majority of the respondents mostly agree with the positive statements regarding to their family. Therefore this shows that they have high Family Self-Concept. The high family self among the respondents contribute to the high mean score in moral-ethical self. As stated by Wood (2006) our family influences the value that we assigned to our behaviour or roles.

We can conclude here that the group of respondents with moderate self-concept has low personal self as the two factors influence each other while for the group of respondents with high self-concept, their high moral-ethical self contributes to this as it influences the perception that the respondents have on themselves through their everyday behaviour.

Self-Concept and Communication Skills

1. Communication Skills and Components of Self-Concept

The results in Chapter 4 reveal that all of the mean scores for one-way ANOVA between communication skills and components of self-concept are not significant. This indicates that none of the components namely physical, moral-ethical, personal, family and social self contributes to the development of communication skills among the respondents. There are a few reasons behind this.

One of the reasons might be due to the fact that there could be other crucial factors besides self-concept that contribute to the development of communication skills among the respondents such as their level of proficiency. All of the final year TESL students obtained Band 4 and Band 5 in their MUET examination (refer to Table 4.2.1). This shows that they have good and satisfactory command of the language (refer to Table 2.0). Due to their sufficient knowledge in English, they are able to perform well during the examination. In other words, they are able to convey the facts clearly and accurately as well as elaborate on them extensively. In this context, the influence of physical, moral-ethical, personal, family and social self are not that strong towards the respondents' performance in communication skills during the MUET examination.

Based from a statement by Zeuschner (2003: 112) stating that "if you think you are far from the ideal, you may become reluctant to participate in class or to stick out in a crowd by expressing your opinion. You might become withdrawn or defensive..." According to this statement, it will be difficult for people with this kind of attitude to obtain good scores in their MUET speaking examination as they have lack of confidence pertaining to their physical self. Contrary to the final year TESL students, although the majority of them have good communication skills, their physical self does not contribute to their high achievement in speaking examination.

The reason of this might be related with the discussion in Chapter 2 where as mentioned before, the physical aspects of an individual could be subjective and depend on the different perception by different people. These uncertainties might reduce or deny the influence of their physical self in their communication skills. Therefore, regardless of their physical aspect they are still able to communicate well during the examination.

Moral-ethical self determines the value that we assigned to our behaviour that affects our self-concept on the overall. As stated by Rosenfeld and Berko (1990: 87) "values reflect the importance you attach to both different ways of behaving..." Through our moral-ethical self, we evaluate our behaviour to determine whether we are good and honest person or other characteristics that represent moral values. As mentioned in section 5.2.4, the respondents' moral-ethical self contributes to the high self-concept possessed by them. However, it is revealed that moral-ethical self does not affect the respondents' communication skills as the connection is too distant. There could be many other factors that influence our communication skills and the value that we assign to our behaviour does not have a strong effect on them.

Similarly for other components namely family, personal and social self, these components influence the development of the respondents' self-concept but they do not have any effect on their communication skills. As mentioned before, the relationship might be too distant where these components do not have any direct impact on the final year TESL students' performance during the 30 minutes duration of

examination. There are other crucial factor such as the students' extensive knowledge on the language that enable them to communicate well.

2. Self-Concept and Communication Skills

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the last research objective is to identify the relationship between the final year TESL students' levels of self-concept and their levels of communication skills. Therefore, the cross-tabulation between these two variables is done to examine the correlation.

The finding indicates that there is no direct correlation between the two variables. This shows that the final year TESL students' self-concept does not influence their levels of communication skills. This is contrary to a statement from Seiler (1996:76) stating that, "our self-concept affects everything we do, especially our communication with others." One of the reasons that contribute to this might be due to the fact that most of the final year TESL students are good in their communication skills (refer to Table 4.2.2) due to their high proficiency in English. This is supported by the findings in Table 4.2.1 where all of them achieved either Band 4 or 5 in their MUET examination. This shows that their knowledge on the language is broad and this allows them to perform well in their MUET speaking examination. Therefore contrary to the popular belief, the role of self-concept is insignificant in the performance of the final year TESL students' communication skills during the examination.

Since this research examines communication skills within the scope of MUET speaking examination, the context is limited to a few subskills only such as the skills of conveying facts, explaining and elaborating on an idea as well as presenting public speaking in front of a number of audiences. Therefore, there are possibilities that as stated by some writers in Chapter 2, self-concept does influence communication skills but the skills might be broader and more universal and not restricted to certain aspects such in MUET examination. The communication skills measured in this research are only restricted to the students' performance within the 30 minutes of speaking examination. As for the communication skills referred by some writers in Chapter 2, they involve the skills performed in our everyday lives. Therefore, this might be one of the reasons why there is no significant correlation between the respondents' self-concept and their communication skills.

Another possibility is due to the nature of the language that is being examined in this research. Since English is a second language for most of the respondents, their performance is directly influenced by the knowledge that they have regarding to the language. As mentioned before, this knowledge consists of their range of vocabulary and language structure as well as the understanding on grammar rules. Thus, their performance in the examination is based on these aspects and is not directly influenced by self-concept. This situation might be different if the native languages of the students are tested. Since the languages come naturally for them, other factors such as selfconcept and self-esteem might directly influence their performance in the examination. Parallel to the main purpose of MUET examination which is to measure the students' level of proficiency, the main concern and focus in the examination is their knowledge or mastery of the language and other factor such as self-concept is found to be insignificant.

A research conducted by Menon (2005) proves this theory as in his research, after a group of respondents (non- native speakers of English) is trained through the interaction strategy where their proficiency in the language is improved, they perform better in their speaking skills. This indicates that the issue of proficiency is the main factor that determines the students' performance in communication skills particularly if the skills are measured in a particular context such as during a speaking examination.

Similarly, a research conducted by Azizah (1996) stated that self-esteem and academic self-image do not influence the respondents' speaking skills. In her research, it was stated that 91.4 percent of the

respondents interviewed denied the influence of self-esteem and academic self-image in their speaking ability. This indicates that there is no direct correlation between the variables. The finding supports this research where there is no significant correlation between the self-concept and communication skills.

This is contrary to a research conducted by Wadman et.al (2008) entitled 'Self-Esteem, Shyness and Sociability in Adolescents with Specific Language Impairment' where it was found that people with language impairment possess lower level of self-esteem. This shows that people with communication problem usually have low self-esteem. Although the term self-esteem used, it still concerns self-concept. According to a model of self-concept by Seiler (1996), self-concept is divided into two categories which are self-esteem and self-image. Therefore we can conclude that self-esteem is the subcategory of self-concept.

A research conducted by Torruellas-Caceres in 1997 stated that there was a correlation between the respondents' self-concept and their communication skills. As stated by Torruellas-Caceres (1997:102) "a hundred percent of faculty members interviewed indicated that one of the most common problems with students with low self-concept or self-esteem is classroom participation..." This indicates that their low self-concept hinders them from communicating and participating in classroom interaction. The result is contrary to this research.

In all, it can be concluded that there is no direct correlation between the final year TESL students' levels of self-concept with their levels of communication skills as the skills covered are only limited during the MUET speaking examination. Besides that, since the language tested is a second language, the students' level of proficiency is the main factor that contributes to their performance during the examination. Therefore, from this research, it is found that self-concept does not influence the final year TESL students' levels of communication skills measured through their MUET speaking skill scores.

Conclusion

There are three objectives in this research namely to identify the levels of UTM final year TESL students' communication skills through their MUET speaking examination scores, to identify their levels of self-concept and lastly to identify the relationship between their levels of self-concept with their performance in MUET speaking examination which reflects their communication skills.

For this purpose, the data from 33 UTM final year TESL students are collected. Two instruments are used to measure their levels of communication skills and levels of self-concept respectively. In order to measure the sample's levels of communication skills, MUET speaking skill scores are used where the scores are categorized into three categories namely poor, average and good. As for self-concept, Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test is used as the instrument to measure the respondents' levels of self-concept where the scores are categorized into three categories as well namely low, moderate and high.

It is found that the majority of the final year TESL students possess good communication skills where the percentage is equivalent to 87.9 percent. Only 12.1 percent of them possess average level of communication skills (refer to Table 4.2.2). As expected, none of them possesses low level of communication skills. In all, we can conclude that most of the final year TESL students have good communication skills. The reason might be due to the fact that all of them obtained at least Band 4 in their MUET examination which shows that they are at least "competent users" of English (Malaysian Examination Council, 2004). This indicates that they possess wide and extensive knowledge regarding to the language.

As for the second objective, it is found that the majority of the respondents have high level of self-concept which is equivalent to 75.7 percent. Only 24.3 percent of them have moderate level of self-concept (refer

to Table 4.3.1). Unsurprisingly, none of the respondents possesses low level of self-concept. When compared between the different components in the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale Test, it is found that the respondents have the tendency to mostly agree with the statements under the category of Family Self-Concept. This indicates that the respondents have high level of Family Self-Concept. On the contrary, the respondents tend to mostly disagree with the statements provided under the category of Physical Self-Concept. This reveals that the final year TESL students have low level of self-concept pertaining to their physical self. Moreover, the research also found that when the respondents are compared according to their different levels of self-concept, the moderate-level respondents have the lowest score for their personal self-concept. On the contrary, respondents under the category of high self-concept possess high score for Moral-Ethical Self-Concept. The reason might be due to the different roles that each component of self-concept plays in the formation of the final year TESL students' overall self-concept.

This research also investigates the level of self-criticism among the respondents to ensure that they are being open and honest while answering the questions provided in the questionnaire. On the overall, the final year TESL students are identified as being honest while completing the questionnaire as the total mean value of the distribution of answers among the respondents under the column of self criticism is 3.5 (refer to Table 4.3.8) which indicates that they are partly agree and mostly agree with the statements provided. This shows that they are sufficiently open to criticism and thus being honest while completing the questionnaire.

As for the one-way ANOVA between the respondents' communication skills and components of self-concept, it is found that the mean scores for all components are not significant. This shows that the five components in self-concept do not have any influence on the development of the respondents' communication skills. One of the reasons might be due to the absent of direct relationship between the respondents' communication skills and the components of self-concept.

It is also found that there is no direct correlation between the respondents' levels of self-concept with their levels of communication skills. This is because the significant two-tailed value in Pearson correlation is more than 0.05. There are many reasons behind this and one of them might be due to the presence of other more important factors that contribute to the development of the respondents' communication skills such as level of proficiency in English.

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