



## ROLE OF SELF-ESTEEM IN ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN ADOLESCENT LEARNERS

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to find out self-esteem and English speaking skills in adolescent learners and the relationship between self-esteem and English speaking skills. This study involved 100 adolescent students (boys & girls) in the age group of 16 to 18 years. Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and English Speaking Skills questionnaire were administered. The results reveal that there is a significant and positive correlation between the learner's self – esteem and English speaking skills. In addition, the obtained results indicate that 14% of the adolescents have low self-esteem, 48% have average self-esteem and 38% have high self-esteem. Moreover, 13% of the adolescents have low English speaking skills, 49% have average English speaking skills and 38% have high English speaking skills. The study could have implications for English language teachers, learners and text book writers.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, English speaking skills and adolescent learners.

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In a foreign language teaching class, today's professional interest is on the students' speaking skill development, because, in general, success is shown through the speaking ability. Speaking English is very essential in language learning because it is a way of expressing your ideas, thoughts, and feelings. This makes it the main concern of many researchers who try to improve the speaking skills through implementing different class activities.

Speaking requires understanding and responding from the part of the speaker, according to Widdowson (2008) "the skill of speaking involves both receptive and productive participation". But it is not only a matter of sending and receiving messages. The speaker should also take into consideration speech context, facial expressions, gestures, and body language which pave the way for speakers to infer meaning. Another important aspect for speakers is knowledge about the

language grammar, lexical items; as a building cannot be built without bricks, so a learner without a mastery of linguistic knowledge cannot progress in the language at all; however, learners should rely also on the knowledge of context bound, information about speakers, and socio-cultural norms. Luoma (2004) stated that: "to speak in a foreign language learners must master the sound system of the language."

Having the confidence to speak in front of an audience or being able to perform tasks successfully, all of this a learner could not do if he/she has not self-esteem. This psychological factor that greatly affects learners specially foreign language learners; self-esteem is the belief in your abilities that you are capable to do things successfully. In other words, when a learner performs activities with confidence and without fear of failure, he is said to have high self-esteem.

According to Barksdale (1989) "self-esteem, on a subtle often unconscious level, is an emotion, how warm and loving you actually feel toward yourself, based on your individual sense of personal worth and importance"

Self-esteem is one of the affective factors that influence human's development among many others; Brown (2007: 154) posited that: "Self-esteem is probably the most pervasive aspect of human behaviour. It could easily be claimed that no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself and self-efficacy, belief in your own capacities to successfully perform that activity". The different levels of self-esteem are classified as low and high self-esteem. First, high self-esteem learners are very confident in their abilities and they can progress in learning. Second, learners with low self-esteem do not trust their abilities at all and their confidence diminishes. The relationship between self-esteem and oral performance has attracted much attention because of the role of self-esteem in enhancing learners' oral performance in oral classes. "No successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem" (Brown, 2000). Because of the role of self-esteem in learners' spoken language, without self-esteem learners are unable to produce language because when learners doubt in their abilities to speak, they are not motivated to speak at all or they do not participate in classroom activities that need more spoken language. In addition, some learners miss classes in order to avoid attending classes and speaking. Such behaviors on the learners' part indicate their fear and lack of trust in their abilities. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to this problem and try to help learners build their sense of self-esteem by motivating them through the use of a variety of activities that attract their interest and relax them, for example, ask them to express their feelings and speak about their dreams.

In recent years, self-esteem has attracted the attention of many scholars in psychology and education and many studies have been conducted to show the contribution of this characteristic to the learning of different subject matters including the

learning of English (Kamarzarrin, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001). A number of studies found that self-esteem affects academic performance in English among students positively (Hui-Ju Liu, 2008; Chapman & Tunmer, 1997; Choi, 2005; De Fraigne, Van Damme, & Ongheda, 2007; Kurtz-Costes, & Schneider, 1994; Marsh, 1990; Marsh & Yeung, 1998). Considering the relationship between self-esteem and oral communication, Niki Maleki & Mohammadi (2009) found that the more successful learners had higher self-esteem than the less successful ones in performing oral communication tasks. Similarly, Naouel (2015) and Ketabi & Kassaian (2011) showed a significant relationship between self-esteem and speaking skills. Likewise, Kalanzadeh, et al. (2013) found statistically significant correlation between the students' self-esteem and their verbal performance.

One of the important steps in learning foreign languages is to master the four micro skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing in order to be competent language learner. Unfortunately, learners do not perfectly master these skills, they still find problems in mastering them. Speaking is one of the four skills that requires special abilities to be mastered, not just the linguistic ability but also the ability to use it appropriately in different situations; as a result foreign language learners find speaking difficult. For the importance of speaking, oral classes provided students with chances to practice speaking in the classroom. The use of a wide range of activities and tasks that require speaking the English language in different situations help learners produce English automatically. Learners still face difficulties in speaking English during oral classes, for example sometimes they forget words or hesitate what makes their speech inappropriate. As a result, learners' failure in speaking was not only a result of the lack of linguistic rules but also psychological factors which intervene in speaking which should be taken into consideration on the part of the teacher. Accordingly, the poor achievement in speaking production is a problem widely faced in Haryana, particularly by learners of English. However, there is a paucity of such studies in India which makes this study even more relevant. Therefore, the present

study aims to determine the prevalence of self-esteem and English speaking skills in adolescent learners and to study the relationship between self-esteem and English speaking skills.

**Method**

**Sample**

The sample included 100 adolescent students (boys & girls) who were studying in class 11 and 12 with age ranges from 16 to 18 years in Jind and Rohtak Districts of Haryana, India.

**Tools**

- *Rosenberg self-esteem scale* (Rosenberg, 1965) includes 10 items which measure self-respect and self-acceptance. It is a Likert type scale with options from (1) strongly agree to (4) Strongly Disagree. Several items are reversely scored according to the authors' instructions. The scale is suitable to be used for school-age children and adolescents (Chiu, 1988; Gurney, 1986). The internal consistency of the scale in the present study was high (alpha = .815).
- *English Speaking Skills Questionnaire*: The author designed this questionnaire for school students of English. The aim was to collect information about learners' attitudes towards learning, specially speaking English in classroom. The questionnaire composed of 10 questions with 3 options for each with a scoring of 2-0 for each question and a total maximum score of 20. Based on the scoring, subjects were classified into low, average and high English speaking skills.

**Procedure**

After taking the informed consent, the participants were briefed about the purpose of study and were assured that the information provided by them would be kept confidential and would only be used for research purpose. Verbal instructions were also provided along with written directions to fill in the questionnaires. Then, participants filled the questionnaires on their own. Each participant was requested to ensure that they have responded to all items of scales.

**Results**

Table 1: Analysis on Prevalence of Self-Esteem

	Number	%
Low Self-Esteem	14	14
Average Self-Esteem	48	48
High Self-Esteem	38	38

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of self-esteem of the adolescents. Result revealed that 14% of the adolescents have low self-esteem, 48% have average self-esteem and 38% have high self-esteem.

Table 2: Analysis on Prevalence of English Speaking Skills

	Number	%
Low English Speaking Skills	13	13
Average English Speaking Skills	49	49
High English Speaking Skills	38	38

Table 2 represents the number and percentage of English speaking skills of the adolescents. Result revealed that 13% of the adolescents have low English speaking skills, 49% have average English speaking skills and 38% have high English speaking skills.

Table 3: Correlation between Self-Esteem and English Speaking Skills

Variables	English Speaking Skills
Self-Esteem	.86**

\*\*p<.01

Table 3 shows significant correlation between self-esteem and English speaking skills (r=.86, p<.01) which indicate that when self-esteem is high then English speaking skills is better in adolescents. On the other hand, low self-esteem decrease the English speaking skills in adolescents.

**Discussion**

The results of the present study reflect the prevalence of self-esteem and English speaking skills in adolescent learners and the relationship between self-esteem and English speaking skills. This study estimates the prevalence of self-esteem i.e. 48% (most of the learners) have average self-esteem. These are the students who have average optimistic valuation of their character, abilities and personal dignity. They believe themselves to be capable, significant, successful and worthy (Miller, 1985; Roy, 1984). The prevalence of English speaking skills

shows that most of the learners i.e. 49% have average English speaking skills which show that they have adequate confidence to speak in English in front of an audience or being able to perform tasks successfully. Correlation results reflect significant correlation between self-esteem and English speaking skills which shows that students who have a high level of self-esteem find it enjoyable to learn how to speak, whereas students with a low self-esteem are not motivated to speak, are afraid and inhibited when they come to express themselves orally; as a result, they often lose marks concerning their academic level in speaking. The present findings are consistent with the earlier findings. Gurler (2015) found significant correlation between self-confidence and speaking skills. Koosha, Ketabi & Kassaian (2011) showed a significant relationship between self-esteem and speaking skills. Kalanzadeh, et al. (2013) found statistically significant correlation between the students' self-esteem and their verbal performance. Similarly, Naouel (2015) also observed a positive relationship between students' self-esteem and their foreign language speaking performance.

#### Conclusion

The aim of current research was to investigate the prevalence of self-esteem and English speaking skills in adolescent learners and to study the relationship between self-esteem and English speaking skills. However, the obtained results are in accordance with the review of literature and in the direction of present research hypothesis, that learners of lower self-esteem have a low level of English speaking skills, while learners of higher self-esteem attain a good level of English speaking skills. Moreover, self-esteem is one of the factors that cannot be neglected for its considerable help, as agreed by Brodkey and Shore (1976) that self-esteem is an effective factor in learning the oral skill of a foreign language.

Present research might have some suggestions for language teachers. As it was shown, the level of learners' self-esteem has a significant effect on English speaking skills learners. So it might be helpful if teachers pay more attention to their students' level of self-esteem and try to enhance it. Teachers must constantly be searching for effective

ways in order to foster learners' self-esteem for effective speaking, and most importantly, draw their students' attention to the relative significance of having faith in their beliefs about their capacities, in order to achieve better outcomes in speaking the English language, and teach them that self-esteem has the total power to direct their results in speaking positively.

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