

# THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM AND THEIR WRITING ABILITY AT THE SECOND GRADE OF SMA N 1 PRINGSEWU

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**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara harga diri pelajar dengan kemampuan menulis bahasa Inggris mereka. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah desain Ex-post facto. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 28 murid kelas XI IPS 4 SMAN 1 Pringsewu. Kuisisioner harga diri, dan tes menulis digunakan untuk mendapatkan data dalam penelitian ini. Kedua data tersebut dianalisa dengan menggunakan *Pearson Product Moment Correlation*. Hasil dari data analisis menunjukkan bahwa ada hubungan yang signifikan secara statistic antara harga diri murid dengan kemampuan menulis mereka pada tingkat signifikansi 0.01. Ini menunjukkan bahwa harga diri mempengaruhi proses dan hasil belajar murid yang mempelajari Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing.

**Abstract.** This study aimed at investigating the correlation between students' self-esteem and their writing ability. The design was ex-post facto design. The subject of this research were 28 students of class XI IPS 4 of SMAN 1 Pringsewu. Self-esteem questionnaire and writing test were used to collect the data. The scores of the two tests were analyzed by using *Pearson Product Moment Correlation*. The result showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between students' self-esteem and their writing ability with the significant level 0.01. It indicates that students' self-esteem influences EFL students' learning process and outcomes.

**Keywords:** correlation, self-esteem, writing ability

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four language skills in learning English. It is an important skill to learn by the students to develop their ability to express their ideas, and establish or maintain social relationship by communicating with others. In other words, writing ability is an important part of communication, because writing is a means to communicate, to convey message, ideas, and feeling in written form. Bryne (1979) states that writing is transforming thought into language. Writing also reinforced the use of sentence's structure and tenses, idiom and vocabulary correctly in order to make the reader get the idea clearly.

In writing, the idea is delivered by words which are put on paper. Meyers (2005) states writing is a way to produce language that the writers do naturally when they speak. Just like speaking, writing is a productive skill that involves producing language rather than receiving it. Since producing is more difficult than receiving, many students think that writing is difficult to learn, especially writing in foreign language like English. When students want to write something they should have a lot of information, ideas, and thought in their mind. Furthermore, not only think what they have to write, but they also have to concern with the generic structure of the text.

There are many factors that may influence the students' quality of writing such as students' grammar, vocabulary, ideas, and personality like self-esteem. It has been known

that writing is not easy. It is hard enough to develop an idea into a paragraph and follow the rules of the text. These factors can cause the students think that they can not do it. They do not believe in their ability. This personality may the main problem for the students to start learning English especially writing. In other words, one factor that might influence students to write is their self-esteem, because as Dedmond (2009) points out, self-esteem is defined as the complication of feelings about ourselves that guides our behaviour, influences our attitudes, and drives our motivation. From that statement, we can connect self-esteem with students' learning outcome, since it guides their behaviour, influences their attitudes, and drives their motivation. Takes for example, if students' level of self-esteem is low, motivation also can be low. When the students do not learn with high motivation, it is difficult for the students to achieve good score.

English teachers apply some techniques and media in teaching writing ability in order to make it easier to master by the students. Unfortunately, although teachers apply some techniques and media, the students still get low score in writing. It may happen because of the students' personality which is self-esteem. According to Coopersmith in Suparman (2010), he defines self-esteem as the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself, it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which an

individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In addition, Brown (2000) states no successful cognitive and affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself and belief in your own capabilities for that activity. So, we can conclude that how we see our capabilities that we call self-esteem influences our successful in learning such as learning writing English.

There are some researchers who have conducted research to find out the correlation between students' self-esteem and their English achievement. Study conducted by Putri (2013) claims that self-esteem has effect on students' speaking ability. The students with high self-esteem can reach better score than students with low self-esteem. It can be concluded that the higher the students' self-esteem scores, the higher their speaking ability and vice versa. Another researcher, Hayati (2013) investigated the effect of self-esteem on students' reading comprehension achievement. She found that there is a significant correlation between students' self-esteem and their reading comprehension. Self-esteem affects the students' reading comprehension achievement by making the students be more confident and have more motivation in learning process, so that it can improve their reading comprehension achievement. Therefore, based on the background above this study attempted to address the following research questions:

1. Is there any correlation between students' self-esteem and their writing ability?

2. What type of self-esteem has the highest correlation with students' writing ability?

## **METHODS**

This research was intended to investigate the correlation between students' self-esteem and their writing ability. This study was a quantitative research in which ex-post facto design was used, because the writer gave no treatment but collected the data and saw the correlation between the variables that happened. The population of this research was the second year of SMAN 1 Pringsewu in academic year 2016/2017, and the sample was 28 students of class XI Social 4. The instruments of this research were self-esteem questionnaire and writing test. Self-esteem was scored by using self-esteem scales made by three different experts. First was global self-esteem questionnaire made by Rosenberg (1965), second was domain specific self-esteem questionnaire developed by Hassan (2001), and third was state self-esteem questionnaire made by Heatherton and Polivy (1991). The total item of the questionnaire was 55 items. First, the researcher gave questionnaire of self-esteem to obtain the data of the students' self-esteem level for 20 minutes. After administering the questionnaire, writing narrative text test was conducted to see students' writing ability. The researcher administered the test for 60 minutes. Then the data were analyzed by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation in SPSS.

## RESULTS

To measure the level of students' self-esteem, the researcher used Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale because it is broadly used to measure Global self-esteem. The result of the self-esteem test can be seen on this following table.

**Table 1. Distribution of the Students' Self-Esteem Test Score**

No	Score Interval	Frequency
1	22-24	6
2	25-27	7
3	28-30	8
4	31-33	5
5	34-36	2
Total		28
Mean		28

From the table above, it can be summed up that there were 6 students who achieved 22-24 score. There were 7 students who achieved 25-27 score. There were 8 students who achieved 28-30. There were 5 students who achieved 31-33 score. There were 2 students achieved 34-36. From the questionnaire analysis, it was found that the highest score of students' self-esteem was 35 and the lowest score was 23, and the mean score was 28.

Thus, students' writing works were rated by two raters, the researcher himself and the English teacher of the school. Two raters then scored the students works based on writing aspect and the scoring criteria adopted from Jacob et al (1981). The distribution of the students' score of writing test is explained by the following table.

**Table 2. Distribution of Students' Writing Test Scores**

No.	Students' Score	Frequency
1.	60 – 63	5
2.	64 – 67	13
3.	68 – 71	3
4.	72 – 75	3
5	76 - 79	4
Total		28
Mean Score		68

From the table above, it can be seen that the highest score of the student's was 79 and the lowest score of the test was 60. The range of the score was 20 and the mean score was 68. It can be seen from the table that 4 out of 28 students reached the highest score. The lowest score reached by 5 out of 28 students. Other 19 students reached scores around the average scores.

In order to know wheter there is significant correlation between students' self-esteem and their writing, the writer analyzed the data by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The following table shows the computation result of the two variables.

**Table 3. Correlations between Self-esteem and Writing Ability**

	Writing Ability
Global Self-esteem	0.705
Domain Specific Self-esteem	0.747
State Self-esteem	0.696

It was found that the coefficient correlation between students' self-esteem and their writing ability was 0.705 with the significant level at the 0.01. Since the coeficient correlation is higher than the critical value ( $0.705 > 0.437$ ), it means that there was a significant correlation between students' self-esteem and their

writing ability. The result of the analysis also showed that there was a positive correlation between students' self-esteem and their writing ability.

According to Brown and Marshall (2006) there are three types of self-esteem; Global, Domain Specific, and State Self-esteem. In table 3, it can be seen that Domain Specific Self-esteem has the highest correlation with students' writing ability among the three types of self-esteem. Meanwhile, the type of self-esteem which has the least correlation with students' writing ability is State Self-esteem. Based on the table 3 above, it can be inferred that each type of self-esteem has significant correlation with students' writing ability, and all of them correlated positively with students' writing ability.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The purpose of the study is to find out whether there is any correlation between students' self-esteem and their writing ability. Based on the result, it was found that there was a significant correlation between those two variables. The possible reason why there was a correlation was because the students with high self-esteem judge themselves positively. When the students believe in themselves, it makes them be more motivated, confident, and less anxious. It is in line with Dedmond (2009), he points out self-esteem as the complication of feelings about ourselves that guides our behavior, influences our attitudes, and drives our motivation. It refers to an individual's tendency as a person which indicates their judgements of

their own worthiness or their appreciation to their own.

The students who have high self-esteem do believe in themselves and their abilities, and they expected to get the best from everything they do. They feel they can succeed in learning English, so they put their whole heart into what they do. As a result, high self-esteem students have more motivation in their learning process that make them would do big effort so that they could achieve good score. Meanwhile, students who have low self-esteem expect to fail. They feel they do not succeed because they do not have the ability to write. These groups of students do not believe in their ability to learn English. Therefore, these learners try less so that they have low writing ability.

The students with high self-esteem were more confident than those with low self-esteem since they believed their own capability, so that they believed that they could write a good text by themselves. In other words, the students with low self-esteem do not believe that they can write a text correctly because they think it is difficult to arrange the idea in words, to translate their idea into target language, or to use correct grammar, then they try to solve their problem by cheating. In other hands, the students with high self-esteem would try to face their problems no matter how the result is.

As the explanation above, the students with high self-esteem would be more confident than the students with low self-esteem, so that they do not shy to use their writing ability. Self-esteem could increase their self-

confidence which made them more active and productive than the students with low self-confidence because they trust themselves more than the low self-esteem students. They almost do not have negative response to themselves and feel they have good quality. This condition made them easy to develop their competence or skill such as writing ability. For this skill, high self-esteem makes learners more willing to write the language with confidence inside or outside the classroom. Learners who feel confident in their abilities are more likely to use those abilities. They do not feel inferior to show their abilities. Since writing is productive skills, the more students practice writing, their writing ability will improve more.

When the students do not believe that they can learn successfully, they will naturally experience more anxiety. Rubio (2007) states that 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 istance and other negative situations. The present study also revealed that the students became anxious when writing in English because they are worry about the score and others' comments. They are not able to overcome the obstacles of learning the language, and consequently feel anxious in the language learning process. They are too afraid that their mistakes will be noticed by their friends or teachers. When the students are too anxious, they doubt their own ability. They think whatever they do is not going to be right. They do not believe that they can do as well as others, so they

do something that less than of which they are capable. They may avoid taking the necessary risks to acquire communicative competence in the target language because they may feel deeply insecure.

In this study, the researcher was also interested in investigating what kind of self-esteem that correlated with the students' writing ability the most. Based on the result, it could be seen that domain specific self-esteem has the most correlation with the students' writing ability, and state self-esteem has the least correlation with the students' writing ability among those three types of self-esteem.

Based on the obtained result, domain specific self-esteem is the type of self-esteem which has the highest influence on students' writing ability. It may happen because English that the subject of this research learn is a specific domain. It may be true that we can not master everything. For example, some students may have good score at English, but they may reach low score in another subject. It is because they believe their ability in learning English. They may think that they are good in English but not in other subjects. The students may think why they have to learn something that they know they can not master it although they already study hard. The student will learn more motivated in subject that they think they can master. As a result, the students who believe their English ability will achieve higher score in English because they believe that they will master it, if they study it.

Students with high self-esteem

evaluate themselves as good students. What the teacher's say is a good suggestion, not a bad comment. They do not think that they make a big mistake because in learning it is normal to make mistake. So, their ability will improve because of accepting the suggestion from others. The students also do not think that the task given by the teacher is difficult. They can do what the teacher instruct. For example, the teacher asks them to write a narrative text. They will do it for pleasure. They believe that they can do it well.

Another possible explanation of this finding is the way students' evaluate their various abilities (domain specific self-esteem) influences their behavior. If they believe they can learn English better than the other subjects, they will love to study English. They will learn and practice more in this subject because they love it. The students may learn English for pleasure. Although no one asks them to study, they will do it. This statement is in line with Brown and Marshall (2006), they suggest that Global self-esteem is totally unrelated to behavior, but this relationship is weaker than the relationship of domain specific self-esteem to a relevant behavior or performance. In addition, Dutton and Brown (1997) state that domain specific self-esteem predicted participants' cognitive reaction to their performance outcomes, whereas global self-esteem predicted participants' emotional reaction to their performance outcomes.

Subject in this research were Senior High School students whose age were 16 or 17 years old. They were adolescent. People in this old already

have stable emotion and their self-esteem were already stable. The least relations between English achievement and self-esteem may occur during the first years of school when both self-esteem and achievement are unstable. One possible explanation for the least relationship between English achievement and state self-esteem is that subjects in the present study were beyond the ages at which both self-esteem and achievement are stable. Probably, there are relations between these variables at earlier ages but the relationships diminish as children become older and self-esteem become stable. As a result, state self-esteem has the least influence on students' English writing ability because the subjects were already adolescent.

Moreover, students' emotional reactions to success and failure may not influence their self-esteem too much because their self-esteem is already stable. Although they failed or succeed, their self-esteem level did not change because they can control their emotion already. When high self-esteem students who thought they had many positive qualities felt bad about themselves after they failed, they did not think about they failure too much, they recover fast. It happened because they believed it was normal to make mistakes while learning. They maintain their high self-esteem or quickly restore. In researcher view, this is the primary advantage of having high self-esteem: It allows someone to fail without feeling bad about him self.

There are some researchers who investigated the relationship between

students' English ability and their self-esteem. The writer found out some research which are relevant to this research as follows. Putri (2013) claims that students with high self-esteem can reach better score than students with low self-esteem. It can be concluded that the higher the students' self-esteem scores, the higher their speaking ability and vice versa. The result of the analysis shows that self-esteem has effect on students' speaking ability.

Hayati (2013) investigated the effect of self-esteem on students' reading comprehension achievement. She found that there is a significant correlation between students' self-esteem and their reading comprehension. Self-esteem affects the students' reading comprehension achievement by making the students be more confident and have more motivation in learning process, so that it can improve their reading comprehension achievement.

Satriani (2014) conducted research to understand the relationship between self esteem and English language proficiency of Indonesian EFL students. During the research, questionnaire was used as the research instrument to obtain the score of students' self esteem. In addition, the data of English proficiency were collected from TOEFL score which has been standardized. The result of this study showed that the students' self esteem have significantly strong positive correlation with their language proficiency.

Those researchers discussed the relationship between students' English abilities and their self-

esteem. They found that self-esteem influences students' learning achievement. The present findings are consistent with the previous findings. The researcher also found that students' self-esteem affects their writing ability. The higher students' self-esteem is, the higher their writing ability is. So, the researcher claims that self-esteem do not just influence writing ability but English achievements.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The present study revealed that there was a significant correlation between students' self-esteem and writing ability with the level of significance 0.01. The positive correlation indicates that the higher students' self-esteem, the higher their writing ability. It can be claimed that high level of self-esteem is an important factor in enhancing English language learners' writing ability. Furthermore, the writer infers that self-esteem as students' personality is an important aspect in achieving good score in writing because it influences students' motivation, confidence, anxiety, and behavior in learning English skill such as learning writing. The writer also agrees with the previous researcher who stated there is a significant correlation between students' self-esteem and their reading skill, speaking skill, and English proficiency. Moreover, the writer assumes self-esteem influences not only students' writing ability but their English achievements.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the conclusions above, the researcher proposes suggestions as follow:

1. The writer suggests to the English teachers that they should concern to the students' psychological factors like self-esteem. This is because the teacher is the one who influence students' self-esteem. He or she should appreciate students, so that the students have positive appreciation on themselves. Besides that, the English teachers may not correct the students' mistake in front of class to avoid students' feeling inferior. Teachers' responsibilities are to create relaxed and friendly situations where the learners can learn with confidence, high motivation, and less anxiety.
2. The writer realizes that this research is not without limitation. First, this study was conducted in a Senior High School level. Therefore, the further research can try to find out the correlation between self-esteem and writing ability in different level of school. Second, further research can try to correlate self-esteem with another English skills.

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