

# Relationship Between Academic Self-Concept and the Students' Academic Performance in Literary Subject

R. Bunga Febriana  
Universitas negeri Semarang  
Semarang, Indonesia  
Bunga.febriana@gmail.com

Dwi Rukmini  
Universitas Negeri Semarang  
Semarang, Indonesia

Januarius Mujiyanto  
Universitas negeri Semarang  
Semarang, Indonesia

Issy Yuliasri  
Universitas Negeri Semarang  
Semarang, Indonesia

**Abstract-**The article presents the relationship between the academic self-concept and the students' performance in literary subject. The present study is aimed at investigating the relationship between the academic self-concept and the students' academic performance in a literary subject. In order to determine whether students have a high score of academic self-concept or low academic self-concept, the writer administered a questionnaire on academic self-concept developed by Liu and Wang (2005). Accordingly, there were two groups of students selected as the low and high academic self-concept participants. By analyzing the academic self-concept developed by Liu and Wang (2005), this groups were divided into the group of students with high academic self-concept level and a group of the students with low academic self concept. Sixty three students enrolling the subject participated in the study. For the study, Literary Criticism subject (LC) was chosen as the object of the study, considering that the students had previously taken a pre-requisite literary subject named Introduction to literature so that in the current level they have been able to evaluate, describe, and analyze literary works. The study revealed a finding that students' academic self-concept has a dominant impact on the students in accomplishing goals in the literary subject. The students with high academic self-concept tend to get good comprehension when reading literary works. The grades of those who were classified as High were higher than those of the students with Low academic self concept.

**Keywords:** *academic self-concept, literature, literary work*

## I. INTRODUCTION

For literature teachers, especially for those in a private university in a region of West Java, teaching English literature to language learners may have some challenges. One of the challenges is that for most students, reading, especially reading literary

works, is not something interesting to do. They tend to avoid reading long passages and often get caught to have attempted to cheat by any means, such as by reading the summaries on internet, rather than trying to read the assigned text and understand it by themselves. It can be said that students tend to be less motivated in reading.

The first challenge leads to another issue of the challenges to teach literature to English as Foreign Language learners. The challenge may come from the characteristics of content of the literature itself. It is obvious that reading literature requires one to have the ability to think critically. This happens, since literature usually contains hidden intention that the authors wants to convey to their readers. The messages of the authors' intention are not literally written in the literary works. Instead, the authors conceal them through symbolism in a story, figurative languages as those in poems, and so on. Readers will not get the authors' messages or intention unless they dig into the literary works and do critical thinking upon their readings. Until this point, it is obvious that having the ability to be a critical thinker is important, especially when you are teaching the students of English as Foreign Language.

Another challenge is related to the lack of English proficiency mastery of the English as Foreign Language learners. It has been a common issue that even in English study programs, many English program students still cannot perform English properly.

Considering some of the challenges aforementioned, one of the factors which make the teaching of literature is somewhat challenging is that the students tend to be less motivated in reading English literary works. These challenges are in

accordance to those elaborated by Isikli & Tarakcioglu (2017). They mentioned that some of the challenges to teach English literature, such as the students' low level proficiency in English, low motivation, lack of confidence, limited resources, lack of material, and so on.

Discussing the students' performance on understanding and giving responses to literary works, the writer believes that the students' academic self-concept plays an important role in determining the students' performance in literary subject. The higher score of academic self concept that a student gets, the better academic performance of literary subject that he/she can perform; and vice versa. The present study seeks to investigate the relationship between the students' academic self concept and their academic performance in literary criticism subject.

## II. ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT

Academic Self-Concept is rooted from a theory proposed by Bem (1972), which is called Self-Concept. Self Concept is one of the constructs in social science that is widely acknowledged to play a central role in all learning situations (Dennisen, Zarret, & Eccles., 2007).

Self-concept belongs to the self-perception which means the descriptive or cognitive component of one's self. As defined by Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith (2012) that self-concept is the cognitive structures which include content, attitudes, or evaluative judgments and focuses attention on one's goals (Oyserman & Markus, 1998, cited in Oyserman, *et.al.* 2012). Eccles in Matovu (2012) explained self-concept as a general view about oneself across various sets of specific domains and perception according to self-knowledge and evaluation of values through one's experiences related to his/her environment. It can be synthesized from the definitions proposed by the former researchers above that self-concept is how one perceives him/herself which include his/her own knowledge and evaluation of his/her own self.

In the academic context, self-concept's terminology is specified into a more narrowed one, which is called Academic Self-Concept. Academic Self-Concept, according to Bong and Skaavik (2003), indicates one's ability of self-perceiving within a certain academic area. The definition is supported by Wigfield & Karpathian, 1991, cited in Ferla, *et.al.*) that academic self-concept refers to individual's knowledge and perceptions about themselves in academic achievement situations. This view is echoed by some researchers that academic

self-concept refers to one's self-evaluation regarding specific academic areas and how students feel about themselves as learners (Trautwein, 2006; Guay, 2003; Harter, 1998, as cited in Matovu (2012).

Baran & Maskan (2011) suggest that environmental factors are essential in the development of academic self-concept. They believed that the academic self-concept influences the learning process, and thus the learner's achievement. This implies that the students' self-concept influence the students' academic achievement, in this case the academic achievement of Literary subjects. This view is also suggested by Marsh (1993) that students with high academic self-concept invest more efforts in their learning, persevere in the face of difficulties and act out of pleasure and choice. Based on the problem statement aforementioned, the writer formulated the following research question:

What is the relationship between The Students' Academic Self-Concept and their academic achievement in literary criticism subject?

Based on the research question, the objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between The Students' Academic Self-Concept and their academic achievement in literary criticism subject

## III. METHODS

The purpose of the study is to find out the relationship between the students' academic self-concept and the students' performance in a literary subject. The study seeks the influence of the students' academic self-concept towards their accomplishment in understanding and responding to literary works. Discussing the relationship between the students' academic self-concept and their performance in literary subject, the writer employed qualitative research design. Frankael & Wallen (2012) explained that qualitative method emphasizes on describing a particular activity, situation, field, behavior of people in depth and a detailed way. By employing a descriptive qualitative research method, the writer analyzed the relationship between the students' academic self-concept and the students' performance in a literary subject.

Among literary subjects taught to the students of a private university, Literary Criticism was selected to be the literary subject for the present study. This is based on a consideration that in the literary subject, the students are required to show their ability in performing critical thinking upon the literary works that were assigned to them to read and to respond. In Literary Criticism, the students are introduced to approaches to literary analysis such as

reader-response, language-based, new criticism, and so on.

*a. Participants*

In the present study, sixty three students enrolling the Literary Criticism subject at the English Department of one private university in West Java participated in the research. The student participants consisted of the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students. The Literary Criticism subject was chosen as the literary subject being the object for the current research, considering that the subject did not merely introduce English literature to the EFL students, rather, it lead the students to be able to evaluate, describe, and analyze literary works.

*b. Instrumentation*

To determine the students' level of academic self concept, the writer administered a questionnaire to the students. This is aimed at finding out to which level do the students belong. The questionnaire is called the Academic Self-Concept questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed by Liu & Wang (2015). It consisted of twenty items of statement. Five scale response options were given, begin with 'Strongly Disagree', 'Somewhat Disagree', 'No Opinion', 'Somewhat Agree', and 'Strongly Agree'. The academic self-concept questionnaire was implemented to measure the students' level of academic self concept. from the questionnaire, two groups of students having high or low academic self concept van be visible. The questionnaire consisted of twenty items of statement and a five scale measurement.

The statements on the questionnaire were as follow:

1	I can follow the lessons easily
2	I day-dream a lot in class
3	I am able to help my classmates in their schoolwork
4	I often do my homework without thinking
5	If I work hard, I think I can go to the Polytechnic or University
6	I pay attention to the teachers during lessons
7	Most of my classmates are smarter than I am
8	I study hard for my tests
9	My teachers feel that I am poor in my work
10	I am usually interested in my schoolwork
11	I often forget what I have learnt

12	I am willing to do my best to pass all the subjects
13	I get frightened when I am asked a questions by the teachers
14	I often feel like quitting school
15	I am good in most of school subjects
16	I am always waiting for the lessons to end
17	I always do poorly in tests
18	I do not give up easily when I am faced with a difficult question in my schoolwork
19	I am able to do better than my friends in most subjects
20	I am not willing to put in more effort in my schoolwork

As the instrument to find out the influence of academic self-concept on the students' academic performance, a document analysis was presented. The students' reflective journals were used as a place for the students to write their ideas, thoughts, judgments, and feelings towards literary works. In the journal, the students can also relate their interpretation to other sources that support their ideas. The documents were used to record the students' responses of the given literary works. The literary works that were assigned to the students in the study included short stories and a novel. There are two short stories and one novel as the literary works that were assigned to the student to read and make the journal of response towards them.

**IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The research question addressed the issue of the influence of academic self-concept towards the students' academic performance in literary criticism subject. The data collected through the research process was qualitative by administering an academic self-concept questionnaire developed by Liu & Wang (2005) and the students' documents of reflective journals. the students' journals contained the students responses to the given literary works.

Based on the results of the Academic Self-concept questionnaire, the score for the high level of academic self concept was  $63.3 \leq x$  , meanwhile, the score for the low level of academic self concept was  $x < 63.3$  . among sixty three student participants taking part of the study, there were 23 students were classified as having the high level of academic self concept since their scores are more than 63,3. the rest of the students (30 participants) were classified as having the low level of academic self concept for getting the score less than 63,3. .

By relating the scores of the Academic self-concept to the students' performance in Literary Criticism subject, the study revealed that the students who are classified as High achieved better achievements in understanding and responding to assignments given (short stories and novels) than those who were classified as Low.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study was aimed at investigating the relationship between the Academic Self Concept and the students' academic performance in literary criticism subject. Sixty three students participated in the study. whereas the study employed a descriptive qualitative research design by administering an academic self concept to the participants and assigning the participant students to write journals of three different literary works.

The study revealed that there was an obvious difference between the students who were classified as having high level of academic self concept and those who were classified as Low on their achievement of academic performance in literary criticism subject. This proved that the students' academic self concept has an important impact on the students' academic performance, since in the study, it was proved that the students who got high score on the academic self-concept questionnaire, performed good academic performance in one of literary subjects, named Literary Criticism subject.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Baran, M. & Maskan, A.K. (2011). A Study of Relationship between Self-Concepts, Some Variables and Physics Course Achievement. *International Journal of Education*. Vol 3, no 1.
- [2] Bem, D. J. (1972). *Self-Perception Theory*. Stanford University, California.
- [3] Bong, M. & Skaalvik, E.M. (2003). Academic Self-Concept and Self-Efficacy: How Different Are They Really? *Educational Psychology Review*. 15(1).
- [4] Denissen, J. J. A., Zarrett, N. R., & Eccles, J. S. (2007). I like to do it, I'm able, and I know I am: Longitudinal couplings between domain-specific achievement, self-concept and interest. *Child Development*, 78(2), 430-447
- [5] Ferla, J., Valcke, M., Chai, Y. ( ) Academic self-efficacy and academic self-concept: Reconsidering structural relationships. Belgium.
- [6] Frankael. J.R., Wallen. N.E., Hyun. H.H., (2012). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education. Eight Edition*. McGraw Hill. NY.
- [7] Isikli, C., & Tarakcioglu, A.O., (2017). Investigating Problems of English Literature Teaching to EFL high school students in Turkey with focus on language proficiency. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*. 13(2),82-95
- [8] Liu, W. C., & Wang, C. K. J. (2005). Academic Self-Concept: A Cross-Sectional Study of Grade and Gender Differences in a Singapore Secondary School. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 6(1), 20-27.
- [9] Marsh, H. W. (1993). Academic self-concept: theory, measurement, and research. In: Suls, J. Psychological perspectives on the self. Volume 4. S. 59-98. Lawrence Erlbaum: Hillsdale, NJ.
- [10] Matovu, M. (2012). Academic Self-Concept and Academic Achievement among Students. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*. 4(1).