

## **Self-concept of EFL Pre-service Teachers: A Reflection from a Teacher Practicum in Indonesia Context**

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### **Abstract**

This study is intended to determine the self-concept of English Foreign Language (EFL) Pre-service Teachers. The self-concept used in this study was adapted from the self-concept of Burns, (1982) and the Teachers' Competence of Indonesia Government Regulation no. 19 article 28 (2005). The self-concept is divided into three aspects: academic self-concept, which is comprised of pedagogic and professional self-concept, social self-concept, and emotional self-concept. The data was collected through the five Likert-scale of closed-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire contains thirty items which represent the aspects of self-concept. The questionnaire was distributed to fifty participants of a pre-service program of English Education Department of Indonesia University of Education. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings show that most of the participants in this study have medium and high average on the three aspects of self-concept. The findings suggest that the participants of this study perceive themselves as prospective English teachers positively.

Key words: *Pre-service Teachers; Pre-service teaching program; Self-concept*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Self-concept is one of many psychological constructs that has been long explored and investigated in various types of fields, such as: health, social sciences, business, psychology, and education, etc. This psychological construct is concerned with how an individual sees herself in several aspects, including academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. As stated by Burns, (1982) "self-concept is the sum of the total views that a person has of himself and consists of beliefs, evaluations and behavioral tendencies."

In the context of education specifically, which is concerned with individual development, many studies reveal that self-concept significantly contributes toward either students' or teachers' individual development. The influence of students' self-concept and their academic achievement has been positively confirmed by many studies, such as those conducted by Mboya, 1989; Garzarelli, Evehart, & Lester, 1993; Dermitzaki & Efklides, 2000; Woo & Frank, 2000, Xiang & Lee, 2002; Powel, 2009, Arnaiz & Guillent, 2012; McInerney, Cheng, Mok, & Lam, 2012). Those studies revealed that the way students perceive themselves affects their academic achievement.

Moreover, teachers' self-concept and its effect on their teaching performance and students' learning have long been explored as well, as indicated in the studies conducted by (Tonelson, 1981; Burns, 1982; Tabassum, 2014). Those studies showed that teachers' positive self-concept contributes significantly toward their teaching performance as well as their students' achievement in learning.

Preservice teachers or student-teachers comprise another population in an educational context which is interesting to investigate for they have double roles; they are students and teachers at the same time. Their success in the role as student may indicate similar success in the teacher education program. Their role and experience as teachers in the preservice program indicates their prospect to be future teachers. (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999).

Several studies were conducted that focused on the issues of preservice teachers in general, such as: preservice teachers' knowledge and competence (Alkharusi, 2011; Nordin, Davis, Arifin, 2013; Valli, Perkkila, Valli, 2013; Walton & Rusznyak, 2013; Masari & Petrovici, 2014), Preservice teachers' perception or attitude toward teacher program and teaching profession (Mule, 2006; Bhargava & Pathy, 2014; Moen, 2014), and preservice teachers' self-concept, and their teaching practice (Tattersall, 1979; Perger, 2001; Guive, 2004; Tabassum, 2014; Adodo, 2012; Davies, 2013; Kumazawa, 2013; Sun & Es, 2015). Those studies highlighted the significance of developing the quality of teacher education and the competence of prospective teachers. However, there are only a few studies focused on self-concept, especially in foreign language teachers (Arnaiz & Guillen, 2012; Kumazawa, 2013).

In the context of Indonesia, English is considered as foreign language. Therefore, the role of English teacher education in Indonesia is crucial in producing competent and qualified English teachers. In an attempt to give contribution few numbers of studies in this topic, this study is aimed at exploring self-concept in foreign language teacher education, particularly English preservice teachers' self-concept. Self-concept in this study is English preservice teachers' self-concept as EFL teachers.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Self-Concept**

There are many definitions of self-concept. One of the more comprehensive definitions of self-concept is that it is a psychological construct consisting of a set of self-description judgments in various domains and an evaluation of competence and the feelings of self-worth associated with each judgement (Pajares and Schunk, 2005), or according to Gecas, (1982): "self-concept is the sum of the total views that a person has of himself and consists of beliefs, evaluations and behavioural tendencies." In essence, self-concept is the psychological process of how a person perceives herself.

The theory of self-concept comes from several works of experts, i.e. the works of William James' on consciousness, Cooley and Mead's on symbolic interaction, Erikson's on identity, and Roger's on phenomenology (Burns, 1982; Eggen & Kauchak, 2007). It is viewed as a multidimensional and multifaceted psychological construct, for people view themselves from various but interdependent dimensions or angles (Burns, 1982; Shavelson & Bolus, 1981; Hattie, 1992; Kerr, 2009; Mercer, 2011). Moreover, the term self-concept often overlaps, and interrelates with other terminologies, such as: self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy, self-beliefs, self-perceptions, subjective competence, identity (Boekaerts 1991; Burns, 1982; Byrne, 1996; Eccles & Wigfield, 1993; Hattie, 1992; Mercer, 2011; Silverthorne, Dubois, Crombie, 2010; Wylie, 1979). However, Burns, (1982) argued that self-beliefs, self-esteem, and self-picture are all parts of self-concept. Therefore, in this study those terms are considered similar.

Self-concept basically comprises two components; the first component provides the description of a person and the second one provides the evaluation one gives to her (Vitro, 1971; Burns, 1982; Eggen & Kauchak, 2007). The descriptive statement is often termed self-picture, or self-image: what the person sees when he looks at her. The evaluation is often referred to as self-esteem, self-worth, or self-acceptance: how strongly the person feels about this self-description (Burns, 1982; Eggen & Kauchak, 2007). Therefore, the terms self-esteem, self-worth, self-beliefs, self-perceptions are regarded similarly to self-concept in this study.

In the bottom of the hierarchical diagram of self-concept, Burns',

(1982) similarly to Shavelson & Bolus, (1981), divided self-concept into four aspects, i.e. academic, social, emotional, and physical. Academic self-concept relates to how a person perceives her competence in an academic setting. Social aspect illustrates a person's perception of her competence to engage in social interactions. Emotional aspect relates to a person's affective feeling. Physical aspect is the person's view of her physical ability. However, this study focuses only on three aspects, i.e. academic, social, and emotional.

### **Teachers' Competence**

Many experts such as Brown, (2001), Eggin & Kauchak, (2007), and Stronge, (2013) classify teachers' competencies differently. However, these experts share a common idea in that a component of good or qualified teachers stems from the competencies that they possess. These competencies are built from required knowledge in this field, i.e. firstly, Subject or Content Knowledge, or the knowledge of what they teach; secondly, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, which is related to the understanding of approach and methods in teaching; thirdly, interpersonal competence, which deals with capabilities in building good and harmonious relationships with others, and fourthly, Personal competence, which is related to good personal behaviour.

Indonesian Government through regulation number 14, 2015 article 10 subsection/ article (1) mandates teachers to have some competences, i.e. Pedagogic Competence, Professional Competence, Social Competence, and Personal Competence.

Pedagogic Competence is the competence related to the abilities involved in managing the teaching and learning process. It covers teachers' understanding of students' needs, teachers' mastery on theories and principles of teaching and learning, curriculum, learning evaluation, and personal reflection. Eggen & Kauchak, (2007) stated that pedagogical knowledge involves an understanding of essential principles on instruction and classroom management that transcends individual topics or subject matter area. It implies that teachers are required not only to understand the process of teaching and learning but also to carry out the theories involved in practice.

Professional competence involves teachers' mastery of teaching materials which enable them to guide students to fulfill National Standard Competence and teachers' active involvement in professional activities such as conference, workshop, and self-development. This competence is very essential for teachers. It is the first element that teachers have to master since we cannot teach what we do not know. (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007).

Social Competence is similar to interpersonal competence (Brown, 2001). It covers teachers' ability to create harmonious and good relationships with related parties in their teaching field, i.e. parents, students, colleagues, etc.

Personal Competence is related to personal qualities which reflect a mature and stable personality, such as wisdom and religious attitudes; an individual who possesses these qualities can serve as a positive role model for students. As indicated by the data analysis, the participants have low personal competence when organizing things, being conscientious in meeting commitments, and being dependable.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The participants of the study were English students who were assigned to do the preservice teaching program at some schools in Bandung, West Java Indonesia in 2014. Therefore, purposive sampling was used in this study. Purposive sampling was used in order to access knowledgeable people who have in depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue or experience (Cresswell, 2006; Ball, 1990 in Cohen & Manion, 2007).

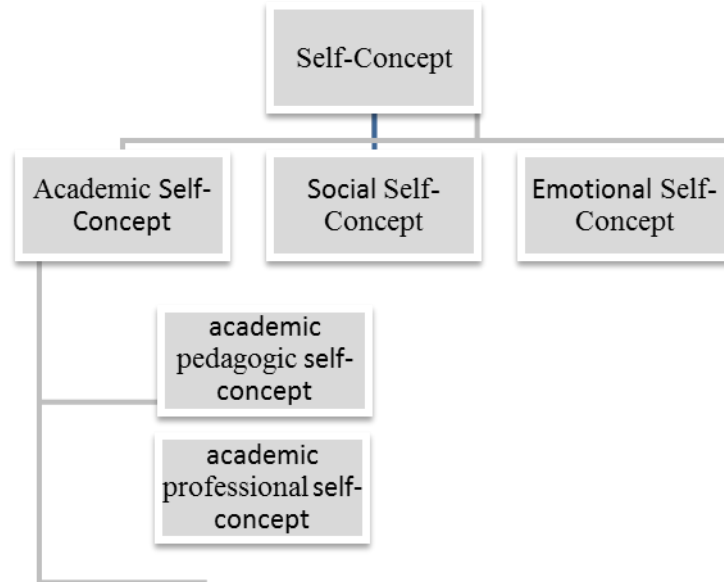
This study employed qualitative approach, particularly a case study. A qualitative approach was selected in order to give rich elaboration and an understanding of phenomena. The case study was chosen for this study since this study shared some characteristics that of case study. The first characteristic is that this study was done on small scale and would not attempt to make any generalizations. The second characteristic is that the phenomenon investigated is in the natural background: the setting of this study is in a class where the preservice teaching program occurs, and the participants involved in the study are English pre-service teachers. The third characteristic is that the focus of the study is the participants' perception and

experiences and the way they make sense of the problems they find during the program, and the study was particularly interested in understanding how those things occur.

The instrument used in data collection is a closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 30 questions. A closed-ended questionnaire is a type of questionnaire where research participants are required to give their opinion or response to prescribed options (Dornyie, 2010; Cohen & Manion, 2007). The questionnaire was distributed to the participants at the beginning of the preservice program.

The questionnaire was adapted from characteristics of good teachers from Brown's (2001) study. It was chosen for its suitability for this research and it also accommodates the sub-area of self-concept of Burns' (1982) and Shavelson's (1976), and also the Indonesian Regulation of Teachers' Competence that includes academic, social, and emotional areas of teachers' competence. The questionnaire is divided into three major aspects of self-concept, Academic Self-Concept (ASC), Social Self-Concept (SSC), and Emotional Self-Concept (ESC). ASC is divided into two more specific aspects, which are Academic Pedagogical Self-Concept (APeSC) and Academic Professional Self-Concept (APrSC). The APeSC is related to teachers' pedagogical knowledge; their knowledge about the principles and approaches of teaching and learning. The participants' perception of their competence in this area is measured by items 1 to 16. The APrSC aspect is related to the subject or content knowledge as English teachers. It encompasses the knowledge and competence in English. These aspects of knowledge and competence are measured by items 17 to 22. The Social Self-Concept (SSC) is related to competence in building good rapport with parties the preservice teachers' interact with at school, which are students, colleagues, and school teachers. This aspect is measured by items 23 to 25. The Emotional Self-Concept (ESC) is related to the feeling and emotional quality of being an English Foreign Language (EFL) Teacher. This aspect is measured by items 26 to 30. A clearer division of self-concept in this study is illustrated by the following diagram.

Diagram 1 Self-Concept of  
Teachers



To measure the tendency of the participants' evaluation of their perception in the three aspects of pre-professional self-concepts, the five Likert Scale was used. Likert scale is a type of psychological scale which is frequently used in psychology questionnaires (Coolican, 2014).

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data in this study. Descriptive statistics is a statistical measurement which is used to describe data without any attempt to draw inference from it. (Cohen & Manion, 2007). To find out the general tendency of the participants' self-concept, the average scores of each participant were divided into three categories: interval scores which range from 1.00 to 2.99 are categorized as low, interval scores which range from 3.00 to 3.99 are categorized as medium, and interval scores which range from 4.00 to 5.00 are categorized as high.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### General Findings of EFL Preservice Teachers' Self-Concept

Data analysis showed that the participants have positive self-concept as English Foreign Language teachers, as illustrated by the following Table 1

English Preservice Teachers' Self-Concept			
Interval	Category	Total	Percentage
4.00 - 5.00	High	14	28%
3.00 - 3.99	Medium	35	70%
1.00 - 2.99	Low	1	2%

Table.1 English Preservice Teachers' Self-concept

Table 1 showed that generally 70 % of the participants of this study are at the medium level, 28 % participants are in the high level, and there are only 2 % in the low category. This indicates that generally, participants have moderate positive self-concept as EFL preservice teachers.

### Findings on the Academic Self-concept

Academic self-concept (ASC) is concerned with pedagogical competence, subject knowledge competence, and professional competence that should be possessed by teachers. Data Analysis of the ASC showed that participants of this study have positive Academic Self-concept (ASC), as illustrated by the Table 2 as follows:

Academic Self-concept			
Interval	Category	Total	Percentage
4.00 - 5.00	High	12	24%
3.00 - 3.99	Medium	37	74%
1.00 - 2.99	Low	1	2%



Table.2 EFL Preservice Teachers' Academic Self-concept (ASC)

Table 2 showed that 74 % of the participants have a moderate level of academic self-concept, 24 % participants have high academic self-concept, and only 2 % have low level academic self-concept.

As has been previously discussed, academic self-concept in this study is divided into two specific domains, which are pedagogical and professional self-concept. The following discussion elaborated the findings of the data analysis on these two specific aspects of academic self-concept.

### Findings on Academic Pedagogical Self-concept (APeSC)

Academic Pedagogical Self-Concept (APeSC) deals with competencies and mastery of the knowledge of teaching and learning. It covers knowledge about approach, method, and theories of learning. Data analysis of APeSC revealed that the participants of this study have positive moderate Academic Pedagogical Self-concept (APeSC), as shown by the following Table 3.

Academic Pedagogical Self-concept			
Interval	Category	Total	Percentage
4.00 - 5.00	High	17	34%
3.00 - 3.99	Medium	32	64%
1.00 - 2.99	Low	1	2%

Table.3 Academic Pedagogical Self-concept

Table 3 showed that generally 64 % of the participants have medium self-concept, and 34 % have high self-concept, and there is only 2 % who have low academic pedagogical self-concept.

Detailed analysis of items for APeSC showed that out of 16 items in this aspect, the lowest average item occurred in item numbers 1 and 9. Item 1 dealt with participants' ability in knowing students' needs. Item 9 dealt with

the usage of ITC to help the teaching and learning process. These findings suggest that the participants perceive their ability in assessing students' needs and using ITS low.

### **Findings on Academic Professional Self-Concept**

Data analysis on the Academic Professional self-concept (APrSC) indicates that participants of this study generally have medium and high self-concept, as shown by Table 4 as follows:

Academic Professional Self-Concept			
Interval	Category	Total	Percentage
4.00-5.00	High	9	18%
3.00-3.99	Medium	37	74%
1.00-2.99	Low	4	8%

Table.4 Academic Professional Self-concept (APrSC)

Table 4 showed that 74% of the participants have medium Academic Professional Self-concept, only 18 % of the participants that have high Academic Professional Self-concept, and there are 8 % of the participants that have low Academic Professional Self-concept.

Further analysis of items in APrSC showed that out of 6 items in this aspect, the lowest average occurred on item numbers 18 and 21. Item number 18 dealt with their understanding of the linguistics systems of English such as phonology, grammar, and discourse. Item 21 dealt with their attendance in conference and workshop, and regular reading in the field of English. The findings suggest that the participants perceive their ability in the linguistics system and English and their attendance in conference and workshop to be low.

Comparing the gain made by the participants on these two divisions of the Academic self-concept, the analysis showed that the participants have a higher level of self-concept on APeSC aspect rather than APrSC. It suggests that the participants' perception of their Pedagogic knowledge is higher than their perception of their Professional Competence.

### **Findings on Social Self-concept (SSC)**

The SSC data indicated that the participants generally have high SSC and then followed with medium SSC, as shown by Table 4.3, as follows:

Social Self-concept			
Interval	Category	Total	Percentage
4.00-5.00	High	37	74%
3.00-3.99	Medium	12	24%
1.00-2.99	Low	1	2%

Table 5 Social Self-concept

Table 5 showed that 74 % of participants in this study rated high in social self-concept, 24 % were moderate, and only 2 % rated low. In other words, the participants of the study showed high perception of their competence in the ability to build rapport with students, colleagues, and school teachers. This finding seemed to suggest that the participants have no problems in building social interactions with the three populations that exist in a school context.

#### Findings on Emotional Self-concept

Data analysis on the emotional self-concept indicates that the participants generally have high and then are followed by medium self-concept, as shown by table 4.3, as follows:

Emotional Self-concept			
Interval	Category	Total	Percentage
4.00-5.00	High	38	76%
3.00-3.99	Medium	12	24%
1.00-2.99	Low	0	0

Table 6 Emotional Self-Concept

Table 6 showed that generally 76% of the participants' perceive their emotional competence high, and the remaining 24% of participants perceive their emotional competence moderately. This suggests that the participants of this study have stable ability in coping with the challenge of teaching.

Further analysis of the items in ESC showed that the participants' lowest score was in item 28. Item 28 dealt with conscientiousness in working,

commitment, and dependability. Meanwhile, the highest item was item 29 which dealt with open-mindedness.

Overall, it seems that although the data analysis showed that the participants of this study have positive self-concept, there is a difference between participants' academic SC on the one hand and their non-academic SC, i.e. social and emotional SC, on the other. In both academic aspects, mostly the students' self-concept was moderate. Meanwhile, in the aspects of social and emotional SC, the participants were mostly in the high level of SC.

### **Discussion**

ASC covers pedagogic competence and the professional competence of teachers. These two competencies are what make teachers; the pedagogic competence shows teachers' actual ability in managing the teaching and learning process, which is supported by their knowledge of approaches, theories, and methods in teaching and learning (Brown, 2001; Stronge, 2010), and professional competence is related to mastery of the content or subject she is teaching and the commitment to personal development (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007; Stronge, 2013). The mastery of these competencies is an essential element of teachers' professionalism (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007).

The data analysis showed that in the aspect of ASC, the participants of this study tended to perceive their competence low in four domains, i.e. the first is knowing students' needs, the second is in using ICT in the teaching and learning process, the third domain is the participants' understanding of the linguistics systems of English such as phonology, grammar, and discourse, and the fourth is participants' attendance in conference and workshop, and regular reading in the field of English.

Knowledge of learners and learning is very crucial and fundamental in teaching and learning (Brown, 2001; Stronge, 2013). This knowledge helps teachers to provide high quality teaching which can improve students' learning (Eggen, & Kauchak, 2007; Stronge, 2010). Therefore, low perception of the participants' ability in knowing students' needs and learning may imply that the participants still have a problem in providing high quality teaching for students.

The next aspect is ICT usage in the teaching and learning process. The use of ICT in the teaching and learning process is important nowadays since teachers can provide rich ways for students to engage in language learning activities (White & Ding, 2009). Low perception in this domain indicated that the preservice teachers have not yet been able to optimize the use of ICT in their teaching. This insufficient competence in using ICT may be caused by insufficient prior knowledge of ICT dissemination (Hismanoglu, 2012; Tokmak, 2015). Therefore, the curriculum of teacher education has to equip prospective teachers with knowledge and skill in ICT.

Moreover, participants' low perception of their SC in understanding the linguistics systems of English implies that the participants perceived their content or subject knowledge as insufficient or limited. Therefore, this perception speaks to the notion that teachers cannot teach what they do not know. (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007; Strong, 2010).

The last domain which received a low perception rating in ASC is the attendance in conference and workshop, and regular reading in the field of English. This finding implies that undergraduate students are still rarely requested to join conference and workshop opportunities. Their attendance in these activities can provide them actual illustration of current trends or issues in their field.

In SSC, data analysis showed that the participants have a better and more intimate relationship with their fellow teachers. Data from the interview also confirmed that they communicated and solved problems during the program more often with their fellow teachers than with their school teachers. It implied that the school teachers and university supervisor gave little contribution toward the participants' development of their self-concept of teaching. However, the role of school teachers and supervisors is expected to be significant, for these individuals are viewed as significant others or parties who are influential toward preservice teachers' self-development. (Burns, 1982; Lipka, 1999; Britzman, 2003). As supported by Britzman, (2003), "these persons attempt to shape the every identities, investment, and practices of the student teacher; they offer their own lived experiences as sources of emulation and re-accentuate the dominate discourse of teacher reform with their own inflections." This finding implies that the role of the supervisor and

school teacher was not fully functional.

The last aspect is participants' ESC. ESC reflects a teacher's emotional state related to being a teacher. Data analysis generally showed that participants have high ESC as English teachers. This can be a good sign since emotional competence can offer the teacher an opportunity to understand themselves better professionally (Ali, 2012), support teachers' performance and decrease teachers' burnout (Jennings, 2011). Having this positive ESC implies that the participants have good emotional assets for being prospective teachers.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

It can be concluded that the participants of this study seemed to perceive their academic competence, mastery of English knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge and skill moderately lower than their non-academic self-concept, social self-concept, and emotional self-concept. Moreover, the roles of school teachers and the university supervisor need to be enhanced in order to make them more functional. This study suggests that investigation of development of these aspects of self-concept is worth considering for further research.

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