

AN EXPLORATION OF STUDENTS' SOCIOMETRIC STATUS BASED ON THEIR BEHAVIORS IN THE EFL SPEAKING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Social interaction among peers became fundamental to be scrutinized, especially in the secondary educational context, which determined the atmosphere of classroom acceptance and the positive relationship. Furthermore, sociometric status refers to the measurement to classify an individual's relationship among peers or groups of friends and the measurement indicating whether the individual is liked or disliked by their peers. This study aimed to explore students' sociometric status toward peer relationships concerning students' behaviors based on the categorization of sociometric status, especially in the EFL speaking class. Thirty-three students in the eleventh grade of the social science class were purposively selected from secondary education to participate in this study. The data were collected through an observation checklist to get students' behaviors. A rating-scale measure was distributed to the students to determine five sociometric status categories among peers. Based on the five categorization of sociometric status among students they were popular, controversial, rejected, neglected, and average have proved that the majority of the students displayed positive behaviors which categorized into highly-positive behaviors (providing assistance, providing direction, and medium-positive behaviors (providing jokes) and only few students displayed negative behaviors were categorized into highly negative-behaviors (inappropriate behaviors, angry shouting, hitting and medium-negative behaviors (noncompliance, disapproval) in the EFL speaking classroom. In conclusion, all five sociometric statuses reflected positive and negative behaviors during the learning process in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: EFL Classroom, Sociometric Status, Speaking Class, Student Behaviors

INTRODUCTION

The primary indicator of the educational institution is to enhance students' academic success, which has become the primary purpose of education today. The objective of an educational institution is to increase the level of academic success, which becomes an indicator of the actualization of educational goals (Bahar, 2010). Cognition has become one of the factors expected to be a valuable asset in today's world. But, in recent times, there has been a growing awareness that cognition, though one of the core factors of success in life, is

not enough to ensure success in life (Mabekoje, 2003). In this case, social interaction among peers becomes the most influential thing in enhancing the quality of education.

Oberle, Reich, Schonert, & Thomson (2010) stated that the most important thing in education is understanding the role of peer acceptance and peer rejection, indirectly contributing to children's social and emotional development. Adolescents have been a growing concern of parents, educators, and researchers who share an interest in promoting positive development and prevention of psychological problems. It is shown that students' psychological aspects become integral to learning, especially in the speaking class. Bashir & Azeem (2011) revealed that speaking becomes the most essential skill that students can gain as they assess their improvement of progress in terms of their achievement in oral communication.

In the interaction process in the EFL classroom, peer acceptance has been an essential factor in creating effective and successful communication among peers. In this case, the issue frequently discussed in relation with that is the presence of sociometric status in the classroom interaction, especially during the learning process among peers. Sociometric status among students is connected with the students' peer relations in and outside the classroom, creating diverse interaction contexts. According to Bahar (2010), sociometric status is one of the assessments used to determine the position of a student among peers. It measures how many students are liked and disliked by peers or groups. Sociometric status can be categorized into five categories that appear in the classroom: popular, controversial, rejected, neglected, and average. Those five statuses can indirectly affect peer relationships, especially in the EFL speaking class.

Concerning the issue above, Rimkiene, V.J & Kardelis (2005) revealed that it is essential to analyze sociometric status in adolescents' social environment in the classroom. This study aims to investigate the classification of students sociometric status concerning the students' behaviors toward peer relationships, especially in the EFL speaking class.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The General Concept of Sociometric Status

Sociometric status is a part of developmental psychology that measures children's status in peer groups. It was developed by Coie & Dodge (Maassen, van Boxtel, & Goossens, 2005). They ask children to categorize or rate how much they liked or disliked each classmate. Gifford-Smith & Brownell (2003) asserted that at the most common level, peer acceptance, or sociometric status, refers to the extent to which a student is liked or disliked by other students in their peer group. According to Rimkiene, V.J. & Kardelis (2005), the interest of sociometric status research is based on the assumption that communication with peers, first of all, close friends, is essential in pupils' lives. According to Carrie C. Finch (1998), indicators of acceptance and love by other group members are referred to as sociometric recognition or peer acceptance. It has become clear that identifying how much students are liked and disliked by peers has become essential to understanding the risk of students' psychological problems. According to Gommans (2010), most children participate in positive and valuable friendships in peer relationships, but there are also children who have far less

satisfying peer relationships. It can be said that peer relationships among students, whether positive or less enjoyable, directly play a fundamental role in students' future development.

Sociometric Status in EFL Classroom

University students, especially in the EFL classroom, are believed to have different intelligence and emotional development. Mabekoje (2003) reveals that emotional intelligence (EI) has been proposed as an essential addition to the landscape of human individual differences and a key determinant of real-life outcomes. It has been shown that human intelligence development is not only the core purpose of education, but the emotional intelligence that concerns students' self-awareness becomes the key to success in the classroom. Teachers are believed to be pushed to develop students' academic ability and strengthen their personality or behavior. Both aspects are essential in conducting comfortable classroom interaction and enhancing students' academic achievement during the learning process. In the EFL classroom, most students come from different ages, sexes, and personalities, and differences in learners are often called. Among those differences in learners, personality becomes a fundamental part of the classroom interaction, in which every student has a different personality in learning a foreign language.

METHODS

Research Design

This research employed a case study observation method, which requires deep examination of an individual or group. In-depth, the researcher investigates, identifies, and explores students' behavior, especially their peer relationships, in a real situation that transpires in the speaking classroom, especially among the sixth semester students. Moreover, quantitative data will be collected to know how many students like or dislike their peers. According to Malik, S.R. & Hamied, A.F. (2016), case study research not only uses a qualitative approach but can also involve a quantitative approach.

Participants

The subject of this research was chosen by purposive sampling. It has specific criteria to determine the subject of this research. Then, thirty students from the eleventh grade of the social science class became part of the study.

Data collection

Two instruments were utilized in this research to obtain the data: the rating-scale measure and the observation checklist. Before observing the interaction among students, especially in the speaking class, the researcher would distribute sociometric assessment to the students to rate their peers. In a rating-scale measure, children are asked to rate each classmate (e.g., a 1-5 scale) according to criteria such as how much they like to play with or work with the classmate (Asher R & Dodge, 1986). Furthermore, the observation will be conducted over three months to learn about peer relationships in the eleventh-grade social science class. According to J. L. Roopnarine & Ph. (1988), the observation will occur in the speaking classroom. It will focus on: (a) Positive Behaviors: help giving, guidance, gift giving,

invitations to play, permission, praise, affection, reassurance and protection, giving status, warm greetings, smiling or laughing with, compliance, acceptance of directions and gifts, cooperative play and promises of reward; (b) Negative Behaviors: noncompliance, rejection of an activity, blaming, disapproval, insults, quarreling, yelling, ignoring, taking or damaging property, physical attacks, and threats.

Data Analysis

To answer the research question of this study, the researcher investigates more deeply about students' behavior based on the categorization of sociometric status commonly transpires in the speaking classroom and the impact of its effects on peer relationship which will be analyzed through case study processes of (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, n.d.). Furthermore, the researcher calculated the rating-scale measure result to find the classification of students' sociometric status by considering low, high, and average acceptance.

RESULTS

Students' Behavior Based on the Categorization of Sociometric Status

To explore deeply how students behave among peers, the researcher, as the main instrument, conducted the research over ten weeks. To prove students' behavior, the researcher attempted to explore their interaction among peers by direct involvement during the learning process. Moreover, while observing, the researcher has field notes to assist in analyzing student behavior using a behavioral checklist. Eight meetings were recorded to identify students' positive and negative behaviors. Then, the result showed that a few students displayed negative behavior. However, most students showed positive behavior toward their peer relationships in the EFL speaking classroom. Furthermore, students who exhibit negative behavior are actively disliked by their peers.

Others actively liked students who had positive behavior. As has been observed, it was found that there were only a few students whose peers disliked, and those students directly showed negative behavior. It was classified as inappropriate behavior during the learning process. In addition, after conducting observation, a rating-scale measure was distributed to the students to know how much each student is interested in learning and talking to their peers. As mentioned in the second chapter, there were five types of sociometric status in the EFL speaking classroom. It consists of popular, controversial, neglected, rejected, and average. Those types of sociometric status frequently existed among peers. Finch (1998) asserted that the rating-scale measure is applied to rate how much they like each child in their class on a scale of 1 to 5, and this method permitted researchers to label children as having low, high, and average acceptance. To categorize their sociometric status, the researcher calculated the result of the rating measure using a 1 to 5 point scale. The result of sociometric assessment using a roster and rating-scale measure can be seen below:

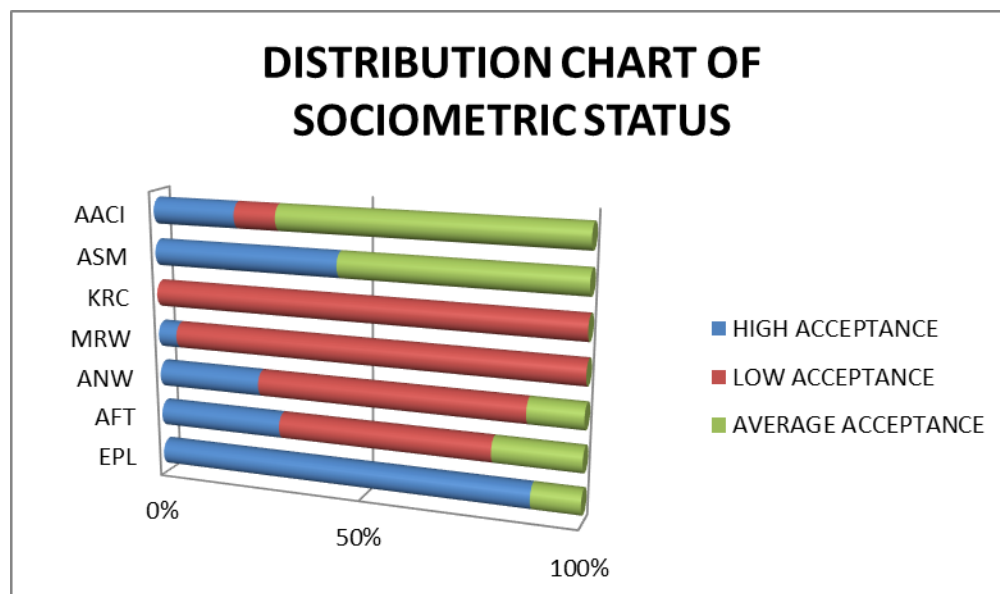


Figure 1. Distribution Chart based on the Categorization of Sociometric Status

The above chart exhibited five sociometric status categories: popular, controversial, rejected, neglected, and average. As can be seen in the result above, the result of the rating scale proved that 16 students rated 'strongly like' on the scale, and it is categorized as having a high acceptance. Then, it has been clear that other peers are like popular students. A popular student was in the EPL, where she was known as a friendly and intelligent student. She has a higher level of cognitive ability, especially in English. (Zakriski & Prinstein, 2001) Concluded that popular children rated high in sociability and mental skills, were good problem solvers, and had positive social traits and friendship relations. The second type of sociometric was controversial.

The table above shows that AFT was a controversial student. In this case, after distributing the rating-scale measure, there were five ratings of 'dislike' to her, and two students rated 'like' to her. It is indicated that she was disliked by some students and liked by some students. This controversial student tended to show aggressive behavior to her peers, but she also showed greater sociability. The third categorization of sociometric status was rejected students. It is believed that peers actively disliked the rejected student, as the rating-scale measure displayed that 21 students rated 'strongly dislike' a student MRW—only one student rated 'like' to her, which is indicated as low acceptance.

Rejected children, who are frequently disliked and not well-liked (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). Moreover, the result of the rating-scale measure showed that other peers disliked KRC; 11 students rated 'dislike' on the scale for her, and it is categorized as low acceptance. Meanwhile, no students rated her as 'like' or 'strongly like'. It is indicated that she was also classified as a rejected student. As seen in the table above, ANW was neglected,

in which five students rated 'dislike' to her and two rated 'like' to her. It was revealed that peers disliked her, and few students liked her.

As shown during the observation, she was not interacting with the other peers, and she had low sociability. She seldom is quiet during the learning process. The last classification of sociometric status was an average student. It has been calculated that ASM and AACI students were categorized as average students. Their peers rated them average, with seven students rating Aac as 'average' and five students rating Asm as 'average'.

The Impact of Sociometric Status on Peer Relationships in the EFL Speaking Classroom

The result of observation showed that there were a few students whose peers disliked them, and others liked some students. Their behavior proved it during the learning process. After analyzing students' behavior based on their sociometric status, it is essential to know the impact of sociometric status in the EFL speaking classroom, especially in the eleventh grade of a social science class. First, different types of sociometric status in a class cause less interaction in peer relationships.

Roopnarine, Adams, & Mounts (1988) revealed that in an attempt to define and assess children's social effectiveness in the peer group, researchers have examined the behavioral tendencies of "low interaction" children. In this case, a student who was classified as rejected is disliked by his or her peer and it made other students unwilling to work with him. As seen from the sociometric assessment result, MRW and KRC were students his peers disliked, and it is proven that most students did not like him.

Based on the outcome of the observation, it was found that both students frequently displayed negative behavior during the learning process. Indeed, they have ever threatened their friends and engaged in inappropriate behavior. Furthermore, their behavior towards their peers prevented them from working with other groups in which the other peers felt uncomfortable with their presence. Moreover, different students were reticent to talk and learn with them. By seeing these impacts, it has been clear that students' behavior, based on the categorization of sociometric status, has influenced social interaction among peers.

According to Ghazi, Shahzada, Tariq, & Khan (2013), the classroom where disruptive behavior transpires frequently gets less academically engaged time, and the students in disruptive classrooms stand in the lower category in achievement tests. Another impact of sociometric status on peer relationships, especially in the eleventh grade of the social science class, was that there was no sharing of thoughts with each other. The teacher is also concerned about the students' cognitive ability in the dividing group. The student with low academic ability worked with a brilliant student in the class. Then, their relationship did not run well in a group, where the bright student still focused on his work without asking for help from the others. Finally, a low cognitive student remains quiet without asking the question to his friend. At the same time, a teacher makes attempts to guide them in a group. Third, the essential impact of sociometric status was that discussion in a group indirectly created stillness, which is caused by peer incompatibility. It occurred because of the neglected student. Kardelis (2005) asserted that neglected students who lack friends but are not actively disliked by their peers usually have somebody who likes them. In this case, the result of observation showed that Ms was a neglected student who had friends, but he only

talked with his close friend. Meanwhile, when he worked in a group, he tended to be quiet until other students invited him to do something. However, the positive impact of sociometric status toward peer relationship was that popular and average students would be able to interact and learn with students with low cognitive ability.

DISCUSSION

Behavior is believed to be divided into two types: positive and negative. However, among those two behaviors, the researcher classified the level of behaviors, including highly-positive, medium-positive, and less-positive behaviors. Meanwhile, harmful behaviors are divided into three classifications: highly negative, medium negative, and less damaging. The study's results showed that most students commonly displayed those behaviors, especially in the language classroom. However, only a few students exhibited negative behaviors, and most displayed positive behaviors. Furthermore, there were twenty-two female students and eleven male students in a social science class.

It is shown that a few male students exhibited negative behaviors, especially highly negative behaviors such as hitting, threatening, and yelling. However, one male student exhibited highly negative behaviors in the learning process. A male student habitually came late to class and frequently exhibited aggression toward his peers, especially female students. Indeed, there was female student did highly-negative behaviors in which hitting, angry shouting, and rejection of an activity had been done by her. Furthermore, some female students displayed highly positive behaviors such as providing assistance, guidance, and direction. However, behaviors frequently done by students, especially female students, were disapproved, especially in the teacher's decision in determining group work.

Those differences displayed by male and female students indirectly displayed differences in emotional development. Menting, Koot, & Lier (2015) revealed that peer acceptance changes may influence emotional and behavioural problem development in boys and girls differently. Then, it has been known that it was essential to investigate students' behaviors toward peer relationships. Because it became a measurement that indicates the position of an individual among a group of friends. Then, sociometric status became the indicator to measure students' position among groups or peers.

As has been discussed, there were five categorization of sociometric status: popular, neglected, rejected, controversial, and average student. Those statuses indirectly influence the way students behave, especially towards their peers. In assessing students' sociometric status, rating-scale measurement has been used to find those five categorizations among thirty-three students. In this case, students were asked to rate their peers on a five-point scale: strongly like, like, neutral, dislike, and strongly dislike.

These five scales indirectly determined the position of an individual in groups. After calculating the result of the rating-scale measurement, the researcher labelled students into three classifications: high acceptance, low acceptance, and average acceptance. Then, seven students were categorized as those who accepted. Those acceptances became an indicator for the researcher to determine the five sociometric statuses of students, such as popular, neglected, rejected, controversial, and average.

The observation result showed four impacts of sociometric status on peer relationships in learning English. First, the effect of sociometric status on peer relationships was the presence of less interaction during the learning process, especially in group work. Roonarine, D.K. (1988) revealed that in an attempt to define and assess children's social effectiveness in the peer group, researchers have examined the behavioral tendencies of "low interaction" children. Second, it also caused incompatibility among peers, which can make students in a group quiet without communicating. However, peer acceptance becomes essential, especially in the language classroom.

Gifford-Smith & Brownell (2003) stated that peer acceptance is distinct from other aspects of peer functioning, notably friendship and social network participation. Indirectly, the research found that the impact of sociometric status became a big challenge for teachers, especially in the secondary context. Sociometric status continues to be an important area of attention for researchers attempting to understand the development of children's social and emotional competence. Third, the essential impact of sociometric status was that discussion in a group indirectly created stillness, which is caused by peer incompatibility. Fourth, the positive effects of sociometric status on peer relationships were that popular and average students would be able to interact and learn with students with low cognitive ability. Studies indicate that popular students have higher academic success (Bahar, 2010).

CONCLUSION

After observing students' behaviors toward peer relationships based on the categorization of sociometric status, the result displayed that most students in the eleventh grade of the social science class have positive behaviors and few students have negative behaviors during the learning process, especially in the EFL speaking classroom. Most students display highly positive behaviors, such as providing guidance, joking, giving direction, and showing affection. Meanwhile, highly negative behaviors exhibited by a few students of the social science class involve inappropriate behavior, hitting, and threats, and medium-negative behaviors such as disapproval behavior, noncompliance, and yelling. However, among those four negative behaviors, inappropriate behavior frequently transpired toward peer relationships during the learning process. Hence, it can be concluded that all five sociometric statuses reflected positive and negative behaviors during the learning process in the EFL classroom.

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