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Self-efficacy, self-esteem and gender as determinants of performance in speaking tasks

Bekele Birhanie Aregu

English Program, Faculty of Humanities, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia.

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The study examines the effects of self efficacy, self esteem and gender on performances in speaking tasks among first year university students. It also analyzes correlations of and gender differences in the variables treated. In this study, 128 participants, who had been interested to participate, were included. To gather data, scales and tests were used. Both descriptive and inferential statistics, namely, t-test, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analyses were applied to analyze the data. The results reveal that male students surpass female students in all the variables treated. It also is evident that all the variables are interrelated positively. Moreover, the output of the first multiple regression analysis show that 55% of the variances in speaking performance is accounted for by the group effects of the independent variables entered in the regression equation. Among these, speaking self-esteem and speaking efficacy were found to have great effects on performance in speaking tasks. Such findings seem to make clearer that attention needs to be paid to the determinants of speaking performance.

Key words: Self efficacy, global self esteem, academic self esteem, speaking self esteem, speaking performance.

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the social cognitive theory, learners' evaluations of what they can perform are important variables that could influence their academic performances (Bandura, 1986, 1997, cited in Zimmerman, 2000). The reason is that judgments of confidence and self-worth could, at least in part, understandably serve as determinants of academic performance, or mediators between the effects of other variables, such as learners' prior knowledge and skills acquired in academic settings, and their [learners'] subsequent academic achievement (Zimmerman, 2000). This implies that the beliefs children develop about their academic capacities are of immense importance to determine what they can do with the knowledge and skills they possess. Therefore, those learners with reasonably good level of beliefs are likely to make differences in any educational endeavor (among

students with similar ability).

Most importantly, self-beliefs of capability and self-worth are believed to contribute to students' academic achievement. In this regard, it is noted that self-beliefs usually serve students well when they attempt to achieve academic goals, as their feelings of capability to accomplish specific tasks help them keep on investing effort, increase perseverance, especially when challenges are faced (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1996). In other words, "self efficacy is seen as a generative mechanism through which persons integrate and apply their existing cognitive, behavioral, and social skills to the performance of a given specific task" (Shell et al., 1989:91). Similarly, self esteem is considered as an important correlate of one's success. Supporting this, Campbell (1984: 12) argues, "having a high self-esteem is what life is all

about."

The relationships of academic achievement to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996), and self-esteem (Marsh, 1990; Shavelson and Bolus, 1982) have been examined by various studies in various fields. Language skills, such as speaking skills, however, seem to have received very little attention from researchers. This is a serious omission given that speaking, which is a complex skill with great importance in every walk of life, could be affected by self-beliefs, gender and other psychosocial factors.

Besides, studies on language performance and self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996; Shell et al., 1989) did not seem to involve speaking skills and gender, which seem worth investigating in different contexts. In all, as to the knowledge of this writer, there has not been any study conducted on self-efficacy, self-esteem, gender as determinants of performance in speaking tasks of college students. Therefore, it seems desirable to fill this gap.

Another issue worth noting is that this researcher as a teacher observed that most students, especially many of female students do not seem to have the confidence to accomplish speaking tasks regardless of the widely accepted assumption that female students often outperform their male peers in language skills and related affective factors, such as feelings of self-worth and capability to accomplish verbal tasks. Thus, this study aims to check if there is a significant effect of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and gender on performance in speaking tasks. To this end, an attempt is made to answer the following research questions:

- Are there relationships among the variables treated (self-efficacy, self-esteem, gender, and performance in speaking tasks)?
- Are there gender differences in self-efficacy, self-esteem, and performance in speaking tasks?
- Which of the independent variables (self-efficacy, self-esteem, gender, and performance) in speaking tasks is the best determinant of speaking performance?
- What are the independent and group effects of the determinants on students' performance in speaking tasks?

METHODS

Participants

In order to examine the reliability and effectiveness of the instruments, methods and procedures of the study, 32 students (18 males and 14 females) were randomly selected from 4 sections (8 students from each). Then, they were provided with the questionnaires, but 4 students did not return the questionnaires, and as a result, the number of students involved in the pilot study became 28.

The subjects of this study were first-year students taking Communicative English skills I in Bahir Dar University. From these students, 144 students were selected using multistage sampling technique. However, in order to avoid exceptional cases, 8 students

who attended private high schools were excluded, and hence the participants were those who attended government high schools. 6 students who did not return the questionnaires were also excluded. Similarly, 2 students who did not take the speaking tests were excluded from the sample. As a result, the number of participants in the study reduced to 128.

The participants' personal data showed that they were at the age range of 17 to 20. In relation to this, it was felt that the observed age difference would not bring significant differences in the target variables. Thus, age was not treated as an independent variable.

Instruments

Speaking self-efficacy scale

For the measurement of students' speaking efficacy, 12 items were prepared. Among these, the first 4 items were adapted from writing self-efficacy scale (Pajares et al., 1999). The rest ones were prepared by this writer on the basis of various literature on the nature of speaking and oral interaction (Nunan, 2004), and then the items were presented to three instructors, who have been teaching Spoken English for a long period of time, for evaluation. After the items had been evaluated, they were revised based on the comments received (from the aforementioned instructors). Finally, they were pilot tested.

This scale measures students' self-efficacy in speaking (tasks), and includes 12 items such as "I can correctly pronounce all words in my speech that lasts 5 to 10 min", "I can express ideas with good grammar", "I can correctly use parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, etc when I speak." Each of the items can be responded on a scale from 0 (no chance) to 10 (completely certain). A high score thus obviously indicates high level of speaking efficacy. The reliability of this scale was found to be 0.88.

Self-esteem scales

Self-esteem was measured in three levels of specificity (that is, global, academic and subject specific levels).

At the global level, the 10-item Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1979, cited in Brodsky, 1988) was adapted and applied. This scale measures the global self-esteem apart from academic and subject specific self-esteem, and includes items such as "I certainly feel useless at times", "I feel that I have a number of good qualities". Each of the items has 5 responses (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree) scored from 5 to 1 (with appropriate reversals for the items that should be reverse scored). So there would be a maximum 50 and minimum 10 score of global self-esteem. A high score thus indicates high global self-esteem. The reliability of this scale has been demonstrated in several studies; for instance, Wells (1988) reported that the reliability of this scale had been found to be .95. In this study, the reliability was found to be .84.

At the academic level, the general academic self-esteem scale (GASES) developed by Skaalvik (1986) was adapted and used to measure students' academic self-esteem. This scale involves 14 items; for instance, "I think that I am good at my school work (education)", "I wish it were easier to understand what I read." Each item has 5 responses (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree) scored from 5 to 1 (with appropriate reversals). There would be a maximum 70 and minimum 14 academic self-esteem score, so a high score shows high academic self-esteem. The reliability of this scale was demonstrated in several research works, for example, its consistency in two different investigations was shown to be .80 and .81 (Skaalvik and Ranking, 1990). In the present study, it was found to be .76.

At a specific level, the academic self-description questionnaire

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables in the study (N=128).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. GEN	-	-	1					
2. GL SE ES	26.4	5.6	.21*	1				
3. ACA SE ES	33.64	6.1	.46**	.36*	1			
4. SP SE ES	23.20	4.3	.22*	.28**	.28**	1		
5. SP EF	52.28	12.8	.38*	.20*	.27*	.30**	1	
6. SP PER	15.03	4	.40**	.28*	.40**	.63**	.51*	1

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Note. GEN=Gender, SP EF=speaking efficacy, GL SE ES=Global Self-esteem, ACA SE ES=Academic self-esteem, SP SE ES= Speaking self- esteem, SP PER speaking performance.

(ASDQII) developed by Marsh (1992) cited in Pietsch et al. (2003) was adapted and used to measure students' self-esteem in speaking. This scale has 9 items like "speaking is one of my favorite activities", "I often need help in speaking tasks". Each item has 5 responses (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree) scored from 5 to 1 (with appropriate reversals). There would be a maximum 45 and minimum 9 speaking self-esteem score, so a high score indicates high speaking self-esteem. Pietsch et al. (2003) reported that the reliability of this scale had been found to be .89. In the current study, its internal consistency was found to be .85.

Speaking tests

In order to measure students' speaking performance, some oral questions that focus on students' biography, hobbies and the like about which they can easily generate enough information when they speak were prepared. Then, students were asked to sit for oral exams. To reduce subjectivity in marking, two instructors who are experienced in teaching speaking marked the speaking tests or oral responses. The markers were, of course, oriented in advance to help them effectively apply the analytic marking technique with some marking criteria, such as accuracy, fluency, relevance of ideas, and the like. Each criterion has 4-point scales (3, 2, 1, 0 with appropriate descriptions). There would be, as a result, a maximum 15 and minimum 0 score of speaking in each test. In line with this, the total score of the two tests for each student was taken as a measure of speaking. The consistency between the two markers was found to be .85 and .81 for each of the tests.

Techniques of data analysis

First, In order to provide readers with an easily understandable overview of the findings such descriptive statistics as means and standard deviations were calculated and presented. Second, to show the interrelationships of the variables under study, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated. In addition, to examine gender differences in self-efficacy, self esteem and performance in speaking tasks, independent samples t-test was employed. Finally, to investigate the independent and group effects of the predictors on student's performance in speaking tasks, multiple regression analyses were applied.

RESULTS

In this section, different tables that show the results of data analyses are presented. Specifically, Table 1 shows

the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables treated. Table 2 shows gender differences in the variables. Following this, Tables 3 and 4 show correlations of the variables among girls and boys independently. Tables 5, 6 and 7 display the multiple regression results.

As indicated in Table 1, the mean scores of students' global self esteem (26.5), speaking self- esteem (23.20), and speaking performance (15.03) are found to be above average. This seems to show that most of the students' scores in the stated variables are greater than the expected scores except for academic self esteem (33.64) and speaking efficacy (52.28), which were found to be below average.

It also seems clear from Table 1 that the relationships of the variables to one another are significantly positive. And these positive relations possibly imply that an increase in one of the major variables is likely to show an increase in the other factors except for gender. But this does not mean there are cause-effect relations among the variables, for the fact that correlation does not necessarily show causal relationships between the variables. One thing that needs to be specifically stated is that Table 1 also depicts a positively significant relationship of gender to each of the variables in the study, and this seems to be indicative of gender differences in those stated variables, but this needs to be checked. Table 2 is, therefore, presented for this purpose.

As indicated in Table 2, there are gender differences in all of the variables favoring males. In other words, the results displayed in Table 2 show that the scores of male students in all of the measures are better than that of female students ($t = -2.51$, $p < .01$; $t = -2.96$, $p < .00$; $t = -2.58$, $p < .01$; $t = -4.66$, $p < .00$; $t = -4.91$, $p < .00$). These results clearly show that males surpass females in all of the measures of the variables treated (global self esteem, academic self esteem, speaking self esteem, speaking efficacy and speaking performance).

From the results seen above, it could be inferred that the associations of the variables among boys and girls are likely to be different. Therefore, Tables 3 and 4 are presented to examine the correlation of the major

Table 2. Gender differences in the major variables treated.

Variable	Female(n=61)		Male(n=67)		t	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
GL SE ES	25.14	5.34	27.59	5.64	-2.51**	.01
ACAD SE ES	30.62	4.64	36.38	6.08	-2.96***	.00
SP SE ES	22.19	3.84	24.11	4.51	-2.58**	.01
SP EF	47.13	11.27	56.98	12.50	-4.66***	.00
SP PER	13.35	2.92	16.52	4.27	-4.91***	.00

P<.01; *P<.001

Table 3. Correlations of the variables among female students (n=61).

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. GL SE ES	1				
2. ACA SE ES	.38**	1			
3. SP SE ES	.22	.04	1		
4. SP EF	.07	.11	.21	1	
5. SP PER	.09	.15	.38**	.41**	1

*p<.05(two-tailed); **p<.01 (two-tailed)

Table 4. Correlations of the variables among male students (n=67).

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. GL SE ES	1				
2. ACA SE ES	.26*	1			
3. SP SE ES	.27*	.29*	1		
4.SP EF	.18*	.12	.26**	1	
5.SP PER	.30*	.32*	.73*	.43**	1

*p<.05(two-tailed); **p<.01 (two-tailed).

variables among boys and girls respectively, so that it would be possible to see if the correlates of speaking performance are similarly significant among boys and girls.

As indicated in Table 3, the relationship of global self esteem to academic self esteem ($r=.38$, $p<.01$) is significant, but its relationships to speaking self esteem ($r=.22$, $p>.05$), to speaking self-efficacy ($r=.07$, $p>.05$), and to speaking performance ($r=.09$, $p>.05$) are non-significant among female students. It is also shown that the relationship between academic self esteem to speaking self esteem ($r=.04$, $p>.05$), to speaking efficacy ($r=.11$, $p>.05$) and to speaking performance ($r=.15$, $p>.05$) is found to be non-significant. Similarly, the relationship of speaking self esteem with speaking efficacy did not reach statistical significance ($r=.21$, $p>.05$), but its relation with speaking performance was found to be significant ($r=.38$, $p<.01$). Moreover, the relationship between speaking efficacy and speaking performance ($r=.41$, $p<.01$) was found to be significant.

Table 4 shows that the associations of global self esteem to academic self esteem ($r=.26$, $p<.05$), to speaking self esteem ($r=.27$, $p<.05$), to speaking efficacy ($r=.18$, $p<.05$) and to speaking performance ($r=.30$, $p<.05$) are found to be significant among male students. The relationship between academic self esteem to speaking self esteem ($r=.29$, $p<.05$), and to speaking performance ($r=.32$, $p<.05$) are also found to be significant, but its relationship with speaking efficacy ($r=.12$, $p<.01$) was found to be non-significant. In addition, the relationships of speaking self esteem to speaking efficacy ($r=.26$, $p<.01$) and to speaking performance ($r=.73$,

$p<.00$) are found to be significant. Similarly, the link between speaking efficacy and speaking performance is found to be significant ($r=.43$, $p<.01$).

The multiple regression results displayed in Table 3 show that 55% of the variances in speaking performance is accounted for by the predictors, namely, global self esteem, academic self esteem, speaking self esteem, speaking efficacy and gender ($R=.74$, $R^2=.55$, $F_{(5,122)}=361.16$, $p<.00$). This seems to be an indication of the need to pay attention to these predictor variables if students are to improve their speaking skills.

When the independent effect of each of the variables (entered into the regression equation) is examined, speaking self esteem ($\beta=.83$, $t=18.08$, Sig. $t=.00$) and speaking efficacy ($\beta=.21$, $t=2.74$, Sig. $t=.00$) were found to be the significant predictors of speaking performance, and yet the impact of gender, global self esteem and academic self esteem did not reach statistical significance. Most importantly, it was found that speaking self esteem contributes 40% of the variances in speaking performance, whereas academic self esteem contributes only 3%. The regression analysis also showed that speaking self-efficacy contributes 11%. From such results, one can say that speaking self esteem and self efficacy determines students' speaking performance to a great extent at university level. Also, it seems fair to say that academic self esteem has a considerable contribution to the variances in speaking performance (at university level).

However, the observed results above may not remain the same if the variables are treated separately among

Table 5. Regression on the Independent and Group Effects of GEN, SP EF, GL SE ES, ACA SE ES, and SP SE on Speaking Performance among All Participants (N=128)

	Variable	SEB	Beta	T	Sig T
R=.74					
R ² =.55	GEN	.57	.12	1.68*	.09
Standard error=2.73	GL SE ES	.04	.01	.23*	.81
F= 361.16	ACAD SE	.04	.13	1.82*	.07
Sig F=.00	SP SE ES	.06	.48	7.26***	.00
	SP EF	.02	.27	4.07***	.00

*P>.05; ***P<.001.

Table 6. Regression on the independent and group effects of GL SE, ACA SE, SP SE, and SP EF on speaking performance among female participants (n=61).

	Variable	SEB	Beta	T	Sig T
R=.52					
R ² =.27	GL SE ES	.06	-.04	-.35	.00
Standard error=2.58	ACA SE	.07	.11	.93	.01
F= 5.27	SP SE	.09	.31**	2.61	.00
Sig F=.00	SPEF	.03	.33***	2.88	.00

*p<.05; ***p<.001

Table 7. Regression on the independent and group effects of GL SE, ACA SE, SP SE, and SP EF on speaking performance among male participants (n=67)

	Variable	SEB	Beta	T	Sig T
R=.78					
R ² =.61	GL SE ES	.06	.06	.74	.46
Standard error=2.7	ACA SE	.05	.09	1.15	.25
F= 24.91	SP SE	.08	.62	7.25**	.00
Sig F=.00	SPEF	.02	.24	2.93***	.00

p<.01; *p<.00

boys and girls. Tables 6 and 7 are, therefore, devoted to checking if the variances in speaking performance accounted for by the predictors independently and in group are similar among boys and girls so that it would provide directions for future interventions and/ or research.

As displayed in Table 6, the impacts of speaking self esteem ($\beta=.31$, $t=2.61$, $p<.00$) and speaking efficacy on speaking performance are found to be significant; whereas, the influence of global self esteem ($\beta =-.04$, $t=-.35$, $p>.05$) and academic self esteem ($\beta =.11$, $t=.93$, $p>.05$) on speaking performance do not reach statistical significance. It is also found that speaking self esteem contributes 17% of the variances in speaking performance. Similarly, speaking efficacy contributes 8% of the variances in speaking performance. But each of the other predictors (global self esteem and academic self esteem) has no significant contribution to the variances in speaking performance. Nevertheless, 27 % of the variances in speaking performance among female students is accounted for by all of the independent variables ($R= .52$,

$R^2 = 0.27$, $F_{(4, 56)}=5.27$, $p<0.01$).

Table 7 shows that speaking self esteem and speaking self efficacy seem to be significant predictors of male students' speaking performance. That is, speaking self-esteem ($\beta=.62$, $t=7.25$, $p<.00$) and speaking self efficacy ($\beta =.24$, $t=2.93$, $p<.00$) significantly influences speaking performance. However, global self esteem ($\beta =.06$, $t=.74$, $p>.05$) and academic self esteem ($\beta=.09$, $t=1.15$, $p>.05$) do not play a significant role in the prediction of speaking performance among male students. In sum, 61% of the variances in speaking performance is accounted for by the group contributions of all of the independent variables among boys ($R=.78$, $R^2=.61$, $F_{(4, 62)}=24.91$, $p<.00$).

DISCUSSION

In this section, an attempt has been made to discuss the correlation among the variables treated. Gender differences in self efficacy, self esteem and achievements in speaking tasks are also discussed. Finally, the effects of

the independent variables on the criterion variable have been discussed.

The correlation among the variables in the study

As clearly depicted in Table 1, all of the variables treated in the study were found to be significantly associated with each other. To illustrate, gender was found to be a significant correlate of global self esteem ($r=.21$, $p<.05$), academic self esteem ($r=.46$, $p<.01$), speaking self esteem ($r=.21$, $p<.05$), speaking self efficacy ($r=.38$, $p<.05$), and speaking performance ($r=.40$, $p<.01$). These findings seem to agree with the results of most studies conducted on gender and its relation with achievement and with self efficacy and self esteem. To mention cases in point, Studies (Yalew, 1997) pointed out that gender relates itself with academic achievement. Specifically, a few indigenous studies (Bekele, 2005) demonstrated that gender is related to writing achievement.

Though correlation does not show cause-effect relation between variables, gender's significant correlations with other variables treated probably show that gender is an important factor that is likely to influence learners' self-efficacy, self esteem, and performances in speaking tasks. In other words, such significant relationships of gender with others, as mentioned above, are indications of gender differences in the variables treated.

As one can also understand from Table1, the relationships of global self esteem to academic self esteem ($r=.36$, $p<.05$), speaking self esteem ($r=.28$, $p<.05$, and to speaking self efficacy ($r=.20$, $p<.05$) were found to be significant. These significant correlations among the major predictors could be attributed to the nature of the variables. Since both self efficacy and self esteem are major components of self beliefs they are likely to share some common elements that are likely to produce strong relationships between the two variables. The relationship between global self- esteem and speaking performance was also found to be significant but very weak ($r=.28$, $p<.05$).

The relationship of academic self esteem to speaking self- esteem ($r=.28$, $p<.05$) and to speaking efficacy ($r=.27$, $p<.05$) were found to be significant. Such significant relationships could be ascribed to the fact that such variables are, as already stated, components of self beliefs. Similarly, the association between speaking self esteem and to speaking efficacy ($r=.30$, $p<.05$) is found to be significant. Most importantly, the link between speaking performance to self efficacy ($r=.51$, $p<.01$) and to speaking self esteem ($r=.63$, $p<.01$) were found to be strongly significant.

From the results, one can understand that speaking self esteem and speaking efficacy are the best correlates of speaking performance. These results are similar to the research findings of Brung and Andt (1987) who reported that beliefs about writing and reading increasingly

become relevant factors in projecting reading and writing skills. In connection to this, researchers (Pajares, 2003) also demonstrated that students writing efficacy beliefs change their motivation and performances in writing tasks. Another study (Pajares and Johnson, 1995) maintained that students' feelings of capability to accomplish a given task have a direct effect on achievement.

Gender differences in the major variables treated

Research findings on gender differences in academic achievement, especially in language performances and related variables seem inconsistent. Similarly, Pajares et al. (1999) noted that even though it seems a common belief that girls excel boys in language areas, the findings concerning gender differences seem inconsistent (in the western context). To exemplify, some researchers (Pajares et al., 1999) found that there are no significant gender differences in writing efficacy. Others (Pajares and Valiante, 1996) reported modest differences in favor of girls. On the Other hand it is noted that boys and girls do not score significantly different marks in writing, but girls surpassed boys in writing efficacy (Pajares and Valiante, 1996). In the present study, however, boys excel girls in all of the variables treated: global self esteem ($t=-2.51$, $p<.01$), academic self esteem ($t=-5.96$, $p<.00$), speaking self esteem ($t=-2.58$, $p<.01$), speaking self efficacy ($t=-4.66$, $p<.00$), and speaking performance ($t=-4.91$, $p<.00$). Such gender differences in favor of boys could be attributed to the existing socio-cultural context in which learners have been reared. In other words, the findings demonstrated concerning gender differences seem to be the reflection of the 'existing' sex stereotypes and sayings that are likely to make females inferior to males. For example, the Amharic saying: "set min betawik bewend yalik" could imply that even though a girl is knowledgeable, she cannot surpass a boy. This is likely to make girls inferior to boys in academic contexts. In connection to this, some indigenous studies showed that females were not able to score as equal as boys in writing tasks (Bekele, 2005) and in related affects, such as attitudes towards writing and writing self esteem measures (Bekele, 2007). Such findings including that of the present study could indicate that gender difference, especially in terms of achievement and psychological constructs is still in favor of males even though it seems to have been increasingly receiving attention from the bodies concerned.

The effects of self efficacy, self-esteem, and gender on speaking performance

In the process of examining the independent effect of each of the variables treated (speaking self efficacy, global self esteem, academic self esteem, speaking self

esteem, gender) on speaking performance, as depicted in Table 3, speaking self esteem was found to be the best predictor of speaking performance, because it was found to account for 40 % of the variances in students' speaking performances ($\beta = .48$, $t=7.26$, $p<.00$). Speaking self efficacy also is found to be a good predictor of speaking performance ($\beta = .27$, $t=4.07$, $p<.00$). Specifically, 11 % of the variances in speaking performance are accounted for by speaking self- efficacy. This result agrees with the research findings of various scholars (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1989; Zimmerman, 1995, all quoted in Pietch et al., 2003), which maintained that task specific self efficacy determines, to a great extent, performances in a given specific task.

The independent effect of gender ($\beta=.12$, $t=1.68$, $p>.05$) on speaking performance did not reach statistical significance. From this, it seems clear to understand that gender does not seem a significant factor in forecasting students speaking performances. Yet it seems questionable and worth examining in rigorous and more controlled studies, because it could be argued that given significant gender differences in speaking performance, as demonstrated in Table 2, the variances in speaking performance accounted for by gender should have been significant. It is also shown that the independent contribution of global self esteem ($\beta = .01$, $t=.23$, $p>.05$) and that of academic self esteem ($\beta = .13$, $t=1.82$, $p>.00$) did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = .27$, $t=4.07$, $p<.00$), and thus it seems that global self esteem and academic self esteem independently do not play a significant role in projecting students' performance in speaking tasks. In the eye of this writer, such non-significant contributions could be ascribed to the nature of global self esteem and academic self esteem.

The variables treated in combination were found to account for 55% of the variances in students' speaking performance ($R=.55$, $F_{(5,122)} = 30.33$, $p<.00$), and therefore, this result seems to inform that it is very important to take actions that could enhance self esteem and self efficacy and that minimize gender differences in self esteem, self efficacy and performances in speaking tasks.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

It seems evident that students' self esteem and self efficacy determine their performance in speaking tasks. Specifically, students with high level of speaking self esteem are most likely to excel those with low level of self esteem in speaking. In a similar vein, students who are efficacious in speaking tend to be good at speaking activities.

Gender seems to be a correlate of performance in speaking tasks, but regrettably gender differences in self efficacy, self esteem and in speaking performance are currently in favor of boys, and hence, one could conclude

that boys surpass girls in self esteem, self efficacy and performances in speaking skills even though it seems common to expect otherwise (especially in the western context).

It should also be noted that as the study is a small scale research, it may be unfair to provide generalizations regarding gender differences in self efficacy, self esteem and performance in speaking tasks among university students. Even so, it could be a good indication of gender differences in achievement and self efficacy beliefs in higher education institutions in Ethiopia.

The results seem to imply primarily that teachers need to be able to focus on helping students develop not only the skills in focus but also self beliefs, such as self esteem and self efficacy in the process of teaching and learning speaking skills, which seem to be stressful to most learners.

Given that self-esteem and self-efficacy are significant determinants of performance in speaking tasks, teachers should place a balanced emphasis on both self-beliefs and speaking skills instead of devoting the whole period to teach the skills without showing practical concern for the development of learners' affects, such as self efficacy.

It seems worth designing projects that could be of great help to improve girls' performance, self esteem and self efficacy in speaking, owing to the fact that the education of women, as Seyoum (1986) argues, can no longer be ignored in a nation like Ethiopia, where almost half of the total population consists of females.

By and large, both teachers and students themselves need to be aware of the roles of self-esteem, self efficacy and gender, and try to bring changes in terms of achievements, affects, and the like.

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