

## The Effectiveness of Asserive Training to Increase the Communication Skills of High School Students in Surakarta

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose-**Assertive communication skill is the ability to express feelings and thoughts clearly and honestly without offending others. Students' behavior such as being afraid of disappointing others, liked or accepted, or hurting someone else's feeling make students difficult to express their thoughts and feelings. This research aims to enhance students' skills in assertive communication.

**Method-**This research applied Research and Development approach. The sample of this study were of 20 students of grade XI IPA 3 SMA Al Islam 1 Surakarta. The subjects were selected purposively from 40 students with low average scores of assertive communication skills.

**Findings-**From the results of pretest-posttest, the students' assertive communication skills improved. It was indicated by the results of quantitative analysis by Mann-Whitney U test showing the z values -2.981 and probability (p) 0.003 ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) and Wilcoxon T test showing the z values -3.922 and probability (p) 0.000 ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ). It meant that Assertiveness Training was effective to enhance students' assertive communication skills.

**Keywords :** Assertiveness Training, Assertive Communication Skills

### INTRODUCTION

The development of knowledge and technology is really fast recently. This development changes people's life especially in term of communication. In the past, communication was conducted in traditional way such as letters. Nowadays, human develop communication into sophisticated technology such as PC and mobile phone. Human is mono-dualistic creatures. They can be individual but also social creature. Individually, human should be able to fulfill their needs and deserve what they want. Socially, human cannot fulfill their need without help from others. The effort to fulfill the needs is conducted through communication. Human have communication every time and everywhere. It is natural because human need rooms for their existence and reward from the environment.

This statement is appropriate with Abraham Maslow's opinion about the hierarchy of needs signifying that human have different needs in different level. The needs are gradually achieved from the lowest into the highest. Those needs cover basic need (physiological needs), needs for safety (protection needs), affection needs (love and to be loved), needs for self-esteem (recognition), and needs for self-actualization (Rae, 2005: 82). In achieving one need, it influences the achievement of other needs. For instance, someone who cannot fulfill his need for food (Physiological needs) because he is unemployment without money will use various ways such as stealing and other negative ways to fulfill his needs. In this case, someone will be anxious if people will catch him. Thus, needs for protection cannot be fulfilled by that person. Social

communication is needed to achieve safety and self-actualization needs because those needs involve emotional and social aspect of an individual.

In addition, life concept related to relationship with others. It is not egocentrism or egoistic. Communication plays an important role for success. Brian Tracy, famous American communication expert, states 12 keys to be successful: (1) changing way of thinking, (2) changing lifestyle, (3) have big dreams, (4) deciding to be rich, (5) have control of our own life, (6) doing the best, (7) prioritizing relationship with human, (8) think genius, (9) freeing mental power, (10) think original, (11) creating our own future, (12) living a perfect life (2007: 11-23). According to Tracy (2007: 11-23), one of key successes is interpersonal communication based on point seven and twelve, prioritizing relationship with human and living a perfect life. She considers relationship with other people is everything. Successful person is someone who is able to maintain good relationship with other people.

Communication skill is very important for a person even since he/she is teenager. Lack of communication skill influences self-esteem and the harmony of social relationship. Good communication is assertive communication. However, to develop assertive communication is not easy. Indonesian culture tends to be more permissive for politeness and respect to particular person. Rejection and true opinion are considered impolite. Thus, it is difficult for individual to be honest and open in giving opinion. Beside that, assertive behavior triggers negative response, and conflict cannot be well settled (Limyati dan Wijayanto, 2007). Based on the interview with guidance and counseling teacher on Monday, February 6, 2012, it is found out that high school students have difficulties in assertive communication. It is characterized by the passiveness of the students during learning process. There is no group discussion. Students also hesitate to communicate with students of different class,

tend to be afraid to ask question to the teacher, and afraid to have objection of an opinion to maintain other's feeling. Prior communication research was conducted by Hapsari on 105 subjects. This research focuses on the influence of communication towards individual's dignity. The research found that assertive communication takes effect on individual's dignity, and the contribution is 34%. Individual with assertive communication has higher positive self-esteem (2007). Communication also influences the success of someone's career. A research was conducted by Syukri and Zulkarnain towards 83 employees.

The research found that assertive communication affect the creativity of employees in Multi Level Marketing. The higher the assertive communication on individual is, the higher the creativity he/she has. The success of individual career is determined by his/her creativity (2005). Another research towards 60 subjects was conducted by Rachmawati. The conclusion shows that the higher their assertive communication is, the higher work satisfaction they get. The contribution of assertive communication towards work satisfaction is 50%. Individual skill in communicating assertively will create comfortable feeling, good interaction between partners, health and productive competition with peers, and positive performance resulted in work satisfaction and productivity (2008).

Triningtyas and Nursalim (2009) observed eight students in a school. Generally, students have trouble in assertive communication. They tend to keep their own problems, not able to vent anger, afraid to have opinion, afraid to ask and answer a question though they know the answer, cannot reject friend's request, afraid to the teacher, and cannot initiate a conversation. Barriers experienced by individuals in assertive communication can interfere with individual's effort to achieve optimum

performance/ achievement (2009-2010). A research towards 80 high school students in Yogyakarta was also conducted by Dwiputriadi and Rachmawati (2010). The research shows that assertiveness inversely to peer-pressure. It shows that students with assertive communication skill get less pressure from the society and peers because they can create a positive effect. They have ability to control every input from the society (2010). Naturally, students are social creature having interaction with surrounding environment include school environment. For that reason, assertive communication is needed to maintain good relationship in that environment. According to Burgon and Huffner (2002), there are three patterns of communication, assertive, passive, and aggressive. Assertive communication is a skill to deliver straightforward and unequivocal opinion without verbally and non-verbally offend each other. Aggressive communication is a pattern in which the deliver of opinion offend other people verbally and non-verbally. Passive communication is a pattern without maximum feedback. Thus, communication process cannot run smoothly. Communication is a form of behavior between individuals (Alim, 2010).

Therapists such as Alberti & Emmons (1970), Lazarus (1973) and Wolpe (1973) explain three approaches towards interpersonal relationship behavior. They are aggressive, permissive, and assertive. (1) Aggressive: thinking only about him/herself and indifferent towards other people; (2) Permissive: always putting others before him/herself; (3) Assertive: firstly, individual will put him/herself before others but then still consider others (Jordan, 2008: 117). Individual with aggressive status will not get positive social reward because he/she harms the society. Individual with permissive status is always anxious because he/she cannot deliver his true opinion. If anxieties kept inward, it will be buried in his/her subconscious which cause mental illness.

Individual with assertive communication feels comfortable because he/she can deliver his/her true opinion without offending/ harming other people. According to the three interpersonal behaviors, assertive pattern should be developed. Assertive behavior is characterized by: (1) respecting the rights of others and him/her self; (2) having courage to deliver higher opinion; (3) being honest; (4) taking circumstances into account; (5) having appropriate body language (Lange & Jakubowski, 1978).

However, assertive behavior is not easy to apply. Individual's difficulties to communicate assertively are caused by various barriers. Pratanti states that people are reluctant to communicate assertively because they are afraid to disappoint other people and also afraid that they will not be accepted or be liked by other people. They just want to maintain good relationship with other people. However, let ourselves without assertive behavior such as keep feeling inward due to different opinion will not be good for social relationship because one party then will feel exploited by others. This kind of fear or anxiety is common in teenagers (Rosyidi, 2010).

Stanley Hall considers adolescence is a time of "storm and typhoon". In this stage, adolescent have mysterious condition. They are easy to be sad and happy. At the same time, adolescent is in the process of searching their identity. In one side they have to be unlabelled as children and the other side they should not be labeled as mature. These things hamper their ability in assertive communication. Assertive communication is very beneficial for adolescents. First, assertive communication facilitates their interaction effectively at school, society, and everywhere. Second, adolescent will be comfortable because they can express their true feelings and opinions to others. Third, adolescent are able to find solution of their problem with or without others' help. Fourth, adolescents are able to develop and to

increase their skills by interacting with others. Fifth, with assertive communication adolescent will understand their flaws and strive to be better. Lack of assertive behavior and the tendency of being permissive and aggressive should not be developed by individuals. Individual who grows without assertiveness must be guided to develop assertiveness through conversion techniques. Conversion techniques or the improvement in the behavior in theory of guidance and counseling is conducted through behaviorist approach. Behaviorist regards human's behavior is not heredity but determined by the environment we are in and the process of learning. Thus, human's behavior can be changed so long as they are eager to learn. A counselor is also needed to create a new environment supporting changes and improvement in the desired behavior. In behaviorist approach, the improvement of assertiveness is conducted by Assertiveness Training. Assertiveness Training creates a new environment and asks individuals to be assertive through assertive games and role playing. Individual will change his/her behavior into assertiveness by exploring the games and the role playing.

Assertive Training can be applied for students with low and moderate assertive communication. Interview towards teacher of guidance and counseling in grade XI was conducted and followed by distributing questionnaires to high school students of class XI. The result shows that 12.5% students have high skill of assertive communication, 75% have moderate assertiveness, and 12.5% have low assertiveness. Based on the questionnaires, the students that will be intervened are those with low and moderate assertive communication skills. It means it needs to develop a research entitled "The Effectiveness of Assertive Training To Increase Assertive Communication Skill of High School Students in Surakarta".

### **Problem Statement**

The research is conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How is the initial profile of student's assertive communication skills?
2. Does Assertive Training influence the communication skills?
3. Is Assertive Training effective to improve students' communication skills?

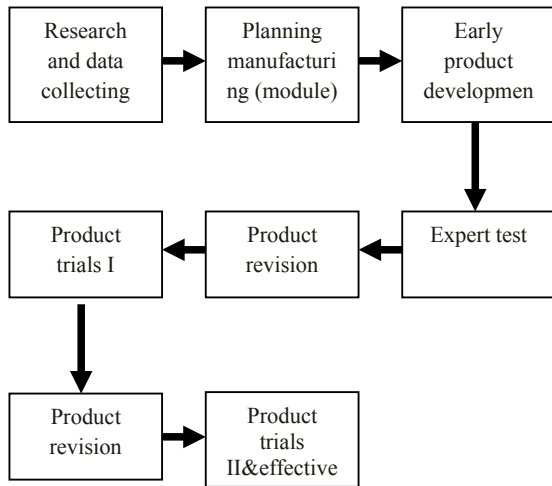
### **Research Objective**

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this research are:

1. Discovering the initial profile of student's assertive communication skills before Assertive Training.
2. Discovering the influence of Assertiveness Training towards the improvement of assertive communication skill.
3. Achieving the level of effectiveness of student's assertive communication skill improvement through Assertiveness Training.

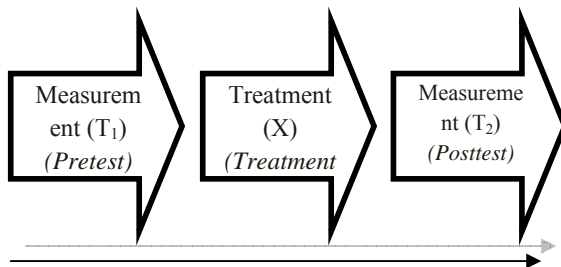
### **METHOD**

This research applied research and development (R&D) approach. According to Borg and Gall (1989; 782), research and development is "a process used develop and validate educational product". The research is the development of prior research to produce new product. It also tests the effectiveness of the product. It aims to improve the quality of research result and find new things out of that research result that is a module of assertive communication skill. The procedures of research and development in this research are presented below:



**Figure 3.2 the cycle of R & D**

This research incorporates experimental research method and pre-experimental research planning. It uses One Group Pretest-Posttest Design. This design can be seen as follows:



**Figure 2. Assertiveness Training**

The figure shows that T.1 is the pretest for the subject. It was conducted by giving questionnaires about assertive communication. X is the treatment for the subject or “Assertiveness Training”. T.2 is the posttest by giving the questionnaires after receiving the treatment.

**RESULTS**

Research and hypothesis results are explained below:

1. Initial profile of student’s assertive communication skill.

Assertive communication skill profile in the prior research shows that 12.5% students have high skill, 75% students have

moderate skill, and another 12.5% have low skill. Each aspect is explained below:

The result from the prior research related to (1) student’s ability to say “No” shows that no one or 0% get high scores. Only 7 students or 35 % belong to high category. 11 students or 55% belong to moderate category. And 2 students or 10 % belong to low category. No student or 0% belongs to very low category. (2) Student’s ability to communicate in a long time shows that no one get high scores or 0%. Only 5 students or 25 % belong to high category. 7 students or 35% belong to moderate category. And 6 students or 30 % belong to low category. 2 student or 10% belongs to very low category. (3) Clarity of sound in speech shows that no one gets high scores or 0%. Only 8 students or 40 % belong to high category. 6 students or 30% belong to moderate category. 30 students or 30 % belong to low category. And no student or 0% belongs to very low category. (4) The ability to express true opinion and feeling shows that no one gets high scores or 0%. Only 1student or 5 % belong to high category. 15 students or 75% belong to moderate category. And 4students or 20 % belong to low category. No student or 0% belongs to very low category (5) the ability to manage emotion when talking shows that no one gets high scores or 0%. Only 2 students or 10 % belong to high category. 8 students or 40 % belong to moderate category. And 8 students or 40 % belong to low category. 2 students or 10% belongs to very low category, and (6) Distance in responding other’s words shows that no one or 0% gets high scores. Only 3 student or 15 % belong to high category. 14 students or 70% belong to moderate category.3 students or 15 % belong to low category. And no student or 0% belongs to very low category.

The next is (7) eye contact. It shows that only 1 student or 5% belongs to very high score, 7 students or 35% belong to high category, 10 students or 50% belong to moderate category, 2 students or 10% belong to low category, and no one or 0% belongs to

very low category. (8) Face expression shows that no student belongs to very high category, 1 student or 5% belongs to high category, 4 students or 20% belong to moderate category, 10 students or 50% belong to low category, and 5 students or 25% belong to very low category. (9) Physical distance shows that no student or 0% belongs to very high category, no student or 0% belongs to high category, 12 students or 60% belong to moderate category, 7 students or 35% belong to low category, and 1 student or 5% belongs to very low category. (10) Student's posture shows that no student or 0% belongs to very high category, 8 students or 40% belong to high category, 9 students or 45% belong to moderate category, 3 students or 15% belong to low category, and no student belongs to very low category. (11) Gestures show that 2 students or 10%, 8 students or 40% belong to high category, 8 students or 40% belong to moderate category, no student belongs to low category, and 2 students or 10% belong to very low category.

2. Hypothesis Testing 1: Assertive Training affect the improvement of assertive communication skills.

The effect of Assertive Training test result towards the improvement of assertive communication skill is presented below:

**Mann-Whitney Test**

Ranks				
Tes	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	
Skor pretest	20	15.00	300.00	
postest	20	26.00	520.00	
Total	40			

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	Skor
Mann-Whitney U	90.000
Wilcoxon W	300.000
Z	-2.981
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.002 <sup>a</sup>

- a. Not corrected for ties.
- b. Grouping Variable: tes

Hypothesis testing result shows there is an effect of assertiveness training towards the improvement of student's (grade XI IPA 3 SMA 1 Surakarta) assertiveness. It is proven by the result of z calculation of -2.981 and probability (p)  $0,003 < \alpha = 0,05$ . It means there is a difference before and after given an Assertiveness Training.

3. Hypothesis Testing 2: Assertive Training is effective to improve student's assertive communication skill.

The test result of Assertive Training Effectiveness towards assertive communication skill is presented below:

**Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test**

Ranks				
	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	
POSTEST - PRETEST Negative Ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	.00	.00	
Positive Ranks	20 <sup>b</sup>	10.50	210.00	
Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>			
Total	20			

- a. POSTEST < PRETEST
- b. POSTEST > PRETEST
- c. POSTEST = PRETEST

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	POSTEST - PRETEST
Z	-3.922 <sup>a</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

- a. Based on negative ranks.
- b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

**DISCUSSION**

Based on the hypothesis testing, the hypothesis stating that Assertive Training is effective to improve grade IX students of IPA 3 SMA 1 Surakarta is acceptable. It is proven by non-parametric analysis Wilcoxon T test of z is -3,922 and probability (p)  $0,000 < \alpha = 0,05$ . It shows the significant difference

between assertive communication skill score in the pretest and posttest. The reasons could be explain as follows:

1. The research on student's assertive communication skill in High School1 (SMA 1) Surakarta indicates the needs to improve assertive communication skill. The effort is conducted to solve the problem of student's communication skill characterized by student's passiveness during learning process, no group discussion, students are shy in communicating with friends of different classes, students are afraid to ask the teacher during the learning process, students lack of courage to refute wrong opinion to keep others feeling. To improve student's assertive communication skill, Assertive Training method is applied.
2. Assertive communication skill consists of two aspects, verbal and non-verbal. Verbal aspects include the ability to say no, length of time in communication, clarity in speech, ability to express opinion and feeling based on his/her real condition, and distance to respond others' words. Non-verbal aspects include the ability to look at the interlocutors or everyone they meet, the ability to express their real feelings, moderate distance when talking, the posture when speaking in standing or sitting position, the ability to use appropriate gestures. Based on the questionnaires made to know the subjects who need Assertive Training in improving assertive communication skill, the research subject's assertiveness skill is low and moderate. It is proven by the pretest analysis result.
3. Efforts to improve communication skills with Assertive Training were conducted over three sessions, in six training sessions. The first meeting is the discussion about the nature of assertive communication skill. It needs to be communicated to the students because based on student's apperception they do

not know about assertive communication. The second and third meeting was the implementation of Assertiveness Training through various techniques such as games, role playing, and modeling.

4. Based on the analysis of posttest score, Assertive Training improves student's communication skill. It can be found out through the result of Mann-Whitney U (U Test) test analysis. It is shown from the fact that the students have courage to express verbally without being afraid of mistakes.
5. Assertive training is effective to improve students' assertive communication skills. The students feel free to respond the questions from the teacher, and the show good friendship among the students. It means the result supports the hypothesis proven through Wilcoxon T Test analysis.

## CONCLUSION

The research concludes that students lack communication skills. To improve assertive communication skill, students of SMA I need assertive training. Communication skill can change due to environment and process of learning. Communication skill can change students' behavior in terms of passiveness during the class, friendships, and other social interactions. Thus, students with assertive communication need to preserve their assertiveness and those without assertiveness need to develop the skill. The key success to master assertive communication skill determined by experiences or repeated training. Thus, students should not give up when they face barriers in developing assertiveness.

From the conclusion, it is recommended that:

1. School in which students spend most of their times should give more attention and guidance for students to develop assertiveness because the skill influences students privately, socially, and

- academically. In private and social aspect, students might feel isolated by their friends due to their nerd appearance. Though that student is smart, he/she is afraid to socialize with others because of others' refusal. Thus, the student will be apathy with his/her environment. Academically, for example, students think they lack of good communication skill. Thus, they are afraid to ask friends and teacher mastering the lesson so that students cannot achieve the lesson's competency.
2. Parents are psychologically closest to students. They have big responsibility in developing student's assertive communication skill. Authoritarian or permissive parents will shape students with lack of assertiveness and even shape their aggressiveness. Parents should pay more attention towards children's communication and create good communication within the family so that student's assertiveness can be developed well.
  3. Other researchers are expected to have cooperation with professional trainer in Assertive Training to develop student's assertive communication so that the training can be more efficient. Beside that, time for the training is quite brief. Thus, it needs longer time for the training to be more beneficial. Next, training observation is conducted in the last meeting due to the allocated time given by school. For that reason, observation towards students through observation sheet in every meeting is suggested to know student's development since the first until the last meeting.

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