Environment and Social Psychology (2025) Volume 10 Issue 7 ISSN: 2424-8975 (O)
doi: 10.59429/esp.v10i7.3905 2424-7979 (P)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Language evaluation anxiety and self-appraisal ability: Their impact on students' oral English performance

Jianmei Ren[1], Wan Suraya Binti Wan Nik[1], Shaoqi Wang[2], Hao Wang[1*]

[1] *Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Putra Nilai, 71800, Malaysia*

[2] *Faculty of International Education, Suzhou Top College, Suzhou, 215300, China*

*** Corresponding author:** Hao Wang, i24027531@student.newinti.edu.my

ABSTRACT

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners need oral English ability for academic and professional success; however, many students are nervous during speaking tests. The psychological mechanisms that cause language anxiety to affect performance have been poorly studied, despite prior studies showing a negative correlation. This study examines whether self-appraisal capacity modulates the connection between language evaluation anxiety and oral English performance in EFL learners. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was utilised, involving 200 university students in China. Participants undertook a Language Evaluation Anxiety Scale (modified from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) and a newly formulated Self-Appraisal Scale. They completed a standardised oral proficiency examination that evaluated pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and general communicative competence. Correlation studies demonstrated substantial negative relationships between language assessment anxiety and both self-appraisal ability ($r = -0.46$, $p < .001$) and oral English performance ($r = -0.52$, $p < .001$). Mediation study employing bootstrapping established that self-appraisal ability partially mediated the association between language evaluation anxiety and oral performance (indirect effect = -0.12, 95% CI [-0.20, -0.06]). These findings highlight the crucial function of self-assessment in mitigating the adverse effects of anxiety on speaking performance. The research indicates that interventions aimed at improving students' self-assessment abilities may alleviate anxiety and enhance spoken English proficiency in EFL settings.

Keywords: language evaluation anxiety; self-appraisal; oral English performance; EFL learners; speaking proficiency; mediation analysis; affective filter

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and rationale

The 21st century has seen the habit of communicating in English to be a success-defining mode among people worldwide, especially among countries where English is not the first language. Not only is English used as the most widespread language in foreign trade, science, and technology, but it has also become the lingua franca in education, diplomacy, tourism, and online communications. Oral English proficiency is crucial for EFL learners' educational options, workability, social strategy, and global integration. [1].

ARTICLE INFO
Received: 15 June 2025| Accepted: 8 July 2025 | Available online: 21 July 2025

CITATION
Ren JM, Nik WSBW, Wang SQ, et al. Language evaluation anxiety and self-appraisal ability: Their impact on students' oral English performance. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2025; 10(7): 3905 doi:10.59429/esp.v10i7.3905

COPYRIGHT
Copyright © 2025 by author(s). *Environment and Social Psychology* is published by Arts and Science Press Pte. Ltd. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

History Learning develops oral English. There is increased focus on oral English in education in the forms of communicative, interactive classrooms, and performance assessments. Colleges in places like China, Japan and Korea, etc, and this includes most states in the Middle East and Latin America, have incorporated oral English assessment as an essential aspect in the language program [2]. Such spoken tests may be presented as a form of presentation, debate, interview, and free and spontaneous speaking, which are intended as a test of fluency, coherence, accuracy of grammar and pragmatic competence [3]. Although it would seem that the shift to the teaching of oral communication has been pedagogically addressed, EFL learners still face many challenges in the attempt to deliver under the conditions of evaluation.

The oral tasks have always been reported in research to be one of the anxiety-causing skills of the language learning process, with the performance being evaluated by the teachers, peers or a standardised assessor. This worry is usually aggravated by cultural and social influences that determine the attitude of learners to public speech, and the need to save face and fear of negative judgment [4]. Anxiety during language evaluation arousal, i.e., the relation in the form of apprehension, which is uniquely aroused in the context of language evaluation of a speaking performance, manifests uniquely both in the pattern of cognitions and higher-order emotional reactions [5]. Compared to those of general classrooms, language evaluation anxiety correlates closely with performance situations during which learners experience a sense of vulnerability, being evaluated and possibly humiliated because of the perceived deficiency. [6]

Anxiety has been known to cripple the thought process of the language and has been recorded in many studies. Anxiety may affect attentional focus and demands, working memory and recovery of linguistic knowledge, which are essential to fluent speaking [7]. Eysenck's Attentional Control Theory has been propagated based on the idea that anxiety tends to attract the cognitive resources that focus on task-relevant processes to threat monitoring, resulting in impaired performance in case of stress [8]. The role of neuroimaging studies has also shown increased neuron activation in brain structures related to fear and self-processing when exposed to stressful up-speaking conditions [9], which again serves as evidence of the physiological facets of the impact of anxiety on speech production [10].

Besides causing cognitive interference, language evaluation anxiety commonly results in avoidance behaviours, poor attribution to participation in the classroom and low perceptions of the learner [11]. Students with strong anxiety tendencies may decide to speak relatively less, cancel their social contacts in English, or even dodge language subject assignments. These consequences cannot be overestimated in the context of language acquisition, academic progression, and career plans of students [12].

Language anxiety has been thoroughly examined in the realm of foreign language acquisition, where it is seen as a significant impediment to performance. Language anxiety decreases oral performance in EFL learners [13]. Anxiety during oral assessments is notably difficult since it can induce cognitive disruption, hindering attention and working memory [14].

Even with the documented interconnection between anxiety and speaking performance, the following question should be brought up: Why is it that some anxious learners just barely manage to perform, and other learners simply collapse, and the communication fails? The question is core in the present research, which is aimed at examining the psychological mechanisms that could be used to explain individual variations in how individuals convert experiences of anxiety into their performance gains.

1.2. Literature review

There is an emerging literature that posits that there is an imperative need for cognitive variables in mediating the relationship between performance and anxiety. Self-appraisal ability is one such variable, which can be defined as the potential of learners to assess their ability in language proficiency level clearly

and be confident in communicative skills even under stress [14]. The ability to self-appraise relates conceptually with other constructs, which include self-efficacy, metacognitive awareness and self-assessment. It demonstrates the knowledge learners have regarding their linguistic competence as well as confidence regarding their abilities to cope with the language tasks successfully.

In the Social Cognitive Theory attributed to Bandura, it is stated that a person would be more resilient when taking on challenging tasks, work harder, and never give up on a task when they think they are competent. On the other hand, low self-efficacy may increase the effects of anxiety, resulting in withdrawal, decreased performance, and unfavourable emotional response. Self-appraisal in language learning contributes to language use: a positive self-appraisal causes students to develop a problem as something that can be dealt with, whereas a low self-appraisal equals treating a task as a threat and something to be avoided [15].

The process of judging stressful situations by the learners. This model implies that emotional reactions of anxiety are triggered by individual judgments on the available resources to handle the situation in question. The student's state of mind is directly influenced by their belief about their ability to speak, by the context of the language evaluation. Anxiety furthers when an individual evaluates his or her poor speaking ability, which causes arousal to the physiological system and disruption of the thinking process [16].

Empirical studies have started looking into the self-appraisal factor regarding language outcomes. Indicatively, French language learners who had high self-efficacy beliefs attained different levels of speaking skills at assessments when compared to those who had low self-efficacy after adjusting language ability scores [17]. The Taiwanese students' perceived themselves verbally had a strong influence on their willingness to communicate and oral examination scores [18].

Nevertheless, although much has been said regarding the emphasis on self-beliefs, few studies have directly taken into consideration the role of self-appraisal as a mediator of language anxiety on performance. Most research has focused on direct relationships between anxiety and performance or on communication tactics to lessen anxiety [19].

There is no doubt that communication processes like paraphrasing, requesting interpretation, and time delay contributed to the control of anxiety in speaking tasks. However, they are external types of coping other than internal cognitive evaluation [20].

An additional limitation in the literature is that many studies treat anxiety as a uniform construct, without distinguishing between general language anxiety and anxiety experienced in high-stakes evaluative contexts. Language evaluation anxiety is a distinct phenomenon, characterised by heightened fear of negative judgment, potential loss of face, and social consequences of failure [21]. This specificity may explain why some learners who cope reasonably well in everyday conversational English struggle profoundly during oral examinations or public speaking events.

Furthermore, cultural dimensions influence both anxiety and self-appraisal processes. Studies in East Asian contexts, for example, have documented particularly high levels of language anxiety related to public speaking, which is often viewed as socially risky due to cultural emphases on modesty, harmony, and avoidance of embarrassment [22]. Learners from such contexts may be more prone to negative self-appraisals and heightened anxiety in evaluative situations, even when their language competence is objectively adequate.

All these findings highlight the importance of examining how self-appraisal acts as the mental connector between anxiety and performance decisions, especially in oral language tasks when the performance is socially observable and can be criticised.

1.3. Gaps of research

The correlation between language anxiety and academic performance in a foreign language has been extensively researched, particularly concerning oral skills [23]. Nonetheless, the moderating effect of self-appraisal on the adverse impact of anxiety is de minimis. Research typically focuses solely on the direct correlation between anxiety and performance, neglecting the effects of self-perception of language skill on this relationship. The study aims to investigate whether self-appraisal can mitigate the adverse impact of language evaluation anxiety on spoken English performance. Based on the Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1997), which holds self-efficacy to be vital to the process of resolving a given challenge, this study hypothesises that the ability of self-appraisal is essential to the process of resolving language evaluation anxiety. The self-assessment technique, which involves the evaluation of the language capabilities of learners by themselves, allows learners to have a better image of their abilities. This increasingly positive self-efficacy, however, leads to decreased anxiety and better performance, especially in evaluative tasks, like oral examinations [24].

1.4. Research contribution

The current study is an original contribution to the context as it combines self-appraisal with the current literature on the productivity of language anxiety and performance. While much of the research has focused on reducing anxiety through external coping mechanisms, this study investigates the potential of internal cognitive processes, like self-appraisal, to buffer anxiety's impact. The findings from this research offer practical insights for language educators, suggesting that self-appraisal interventions may significantly improve oral English performance in high-stakes evaluative contexts

1.5. Purpose statement

Against these knowledge gaps, the current research therefore tries to explore the intricate correlations between frameworks of language evaluation anxiety, self-review capacity, and everyday English duality in university EFL students. This study examines how self-appraisal capacity moderates language evaluation anxiety and speaking performance in high-stakes evaluation circumstances.

This study attempts to contribute to the theoretical knowledge and inform pedagogical approaches by combining all of these variables into an overall model. The results can be helpful to the language teachers, curriculum designers, and psychological educators to increase the performance and speaking confidence of learners.

1.6. Research questions

Accordingly, the research is guided by the following questions:

1. How does language evaluation anxiety influence students' self-appraisal of their oral English performance?
2. Does self-appraisal ability mediate the relationship between language evaluation anxiety and students' oral English performance?
3. Are there significant differences in these relationships across different levels of English proficiency?

1.7. Hypotheses

Based on literature and theory, the following possibilities are proposed:

- **H1:** Higher language evaluation anxiety predicts lower self-appraisal ability.
- **H2:** Lower self-appraisal ability predicts poorer oral English performance.
- **H3:** Self-appraisal ability mediates the relationship between language evaluation anxiety and oral English performance.

Understanding the psychological underpinnings of oral language performance is of paramount importance for language educators and learners alike. By examining self-appraisal as a potential mediator between anxiety and performance, the present study seeks to fill a significant gap in the field of applied linguistics and educational psychology. The outcomes of this research have the potential to reshape teaching practices, enabling educators to address not only linguistic competence but also the affective and cognitive processes that influence learners' success in oral communication.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Research design

This paper involved a quantitative, cross-sectional study to investigate the interrelationship between language evaluation anxiety, self-appraisal skill, and oral English proficiency at EFL universities. Based on a conceptual framework they had worked out, a mediation model was formulated and tested to establish whether ability in self-appraisal was an intervening factor in the association that existed between language evaluation anxiety and oral English proficiency by students. The mediation analysis was selected because, beyond direct effects, the researchers can investigate the indirect effects or routes that one variable may have on another. Because, in the past, literature has proposed complex processes in psychology as a basis of language performance [25], a mediation approach offered an appropriate model in the view of how sources of cognitive self-assessments would affect the interaction between affective states and overt performance outcomes.

Besides, a cross-sectional survey design was suitable because it considered the scope and the resources available to perform the research, given the relatively large number of respondents to be surveyed within a specific time. Even though longitudinal designs may be more efficient in recording the changes over time, the cross-sectional designs are also a viable way to measure and observe the relationships proven feasible and sound for testing theoretical models in research conducted through social sciences. The quantitative method also permitted the quantification of the results by letting the team conduct in-depth analyses (regression analysis and mediation modelling) in order to make inferential representations based on the findings.

2.2. Participants

Two hundred undergraduate students were pursuing English language programs in two comprehensive universities in eastern China. It was decided that those universities will be picked because they reflect the common situation of higher education in this area, where English language courses are provided as a general educational requirement to all the students not majoring in English. The type of sampling was convenience sampling, which was selected owing to accessibility and feasibility arguments. However, the exact number that would be sufficient to support mediation analysis was considered. The minimum number of cases points to at least 200 cases, and such a structural model will be a good one.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 years, and the mean was 20.5 years (SD = 1.4). The sex ratio was 120 females (60%) to 80 males (40 %). A wide range of academic fields was represented by participants majoring in fields such as Business Administration, Computer Science, Environmental Engineering, and

Education. Each of the participants had at least six years of previous study of the English language, as per the mandatory English study in China from middle school onwards.

Respective universities conducted institutional placement tests to determine the proficiency levels within the universities as part of their academic practices. They were confined to intermediate and above groups, such as the College English Test (CET) Band 4 or higher, which fits the anticipated degree of achievement of the undergraduate in universities in China. It meant that the participants had adequate levels of English, which enabled them to participate effectively in oral proficiency tests.

The study was completely voluntary. Students were notified that their decision to participate or not did not influence their academic status and grades. There was no provision of financial or material incentives. The procedure was congruent with ethical requirements in research involving human subjects.

2.3. Instruments

2.3.1. Language evaluation anxiety scale

The evaluation of language anxiety was based on 15 items, which are an adaptation of the well-known Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) articulated by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). Although the original FLCAS focuses on measuring the general anxiety related to language learning, a number of its items were adapted to specifically target anxiety in the domain of evaluation of language behaviour in evaluative situations (oral examination, presentation before an audience, classroom presentations). A slight adaptation was required to make the instrument suit the area of individual focus on this study, related to performance-related anxiety [26].

Examples of adaptation on the scale are:

I get anxious when I am being tested on my English skills by instructors. “Every time there is some oral exam, I am afraid that I will forget everything I want to say.” I feel anxious whenever I am speaking English in a group of people who can criticise my faults.

The ratings of the agreement with each item were given on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The greater the total scores were, the more language evaluation anxiety was reported. The modified scale was piloted in 30 students of the same university before the actual study. The pilot feedback resulted in a few revisions to make the text more understandable and culturally relevant. In the parent study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.89, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability [27].

2.3.2. Self-appraisal scale

The instrument to assess the ability to self-appraise was a 10-item Self-Appraisal Scale that was designed as a new instrument to be utilised in the specific study. The scale was created to determine the rates of students trusting themselves in evaluating their oratory language abilities and their confidence in their sense of judgment on their ability to talk accurately. Aiming to improve knowledge about self-efficacy, self-assessment practices in language learning, and metacognitive awareness, a literature review was conducted on these aspects. Items were generated to capture cognitive, as well as affective, properties of self-appraisal.

Among the samples, there are:

In conversations, I am good at judging whether I speak English well.

Having delivered a speech in English, I may analyse what I did well and what I should do better.

I will not rely on what other people say about my competence in English speaking abilities, despite my assessment that I may be weak in this aspect.

The respondents rated the items on a five-point Likert scale (1, strongly disagree; 5, strongly agree). The greater the score, the more effective the ability of self-appraisal. Two applied linguists administered the scale in terms of content validity and ensured that the items were within the scope of the target population. The readability and clarity of the scale were established after a pilot study. The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, which showed it to have good internal consistency.

2.3.3. Oral english performance test

To evaluate students' oral English performance, a standardised oral proficiency test was conducted, which was developed based on the speaking section of the College English Test (CET) set up in China. Design of the test comprised two complementary parts intended to test individual expressive, as well as interactive communicative abilities [28].

- **Individual Presentation:** Each student was given two minutes to deliver a speech on a randomly assigned familiar topic (e.g., "Describe a memorable holiday," "Talk about your future career plans"). Topics were selected from a pre-validated pool to ensure familiarity and fairness across participants.
- **Interactive Dialogue:** Students engaged in a three-minute conversation with a trained examiner. Dialogue prompts encouraged participants to express opinions, respond to questions, and negotiate meaning. Sample prompts included:
  - "Why do you think learning English is important for your future career?"
  - "Do you prefer studying alone or in groups? Why?"

All performances were audio-recorded for subsequent analysis. The recordings were rated independently by two experienced English language teachers, each with more than five years of teaching and assessment experience. Raters were trained before the assessment sessions to ensure consistency in scoring.

A detailed **analytic scoring rubric** was used, evaluating the following four dimensions:

- **Pronunciation and Intonation:** Clarity, stress, rhythm, and naturalness of speech.
- **Grammar and Vocabulary:** Range, accuracy, and appropriateness of language use.
- **Communication Skills and Discourse Management:** Ability to organise ideas, maintain coherence, and respond appropriately.
- **Overall Fluency and Confidence:** Smoothness of speech, speed, and confidence.

Each criterion was scored on a **five-point scale** (1 = very poor, 5 = excellent). Total scores ranged from 4 to 20. Inter-rater reliability was high, with an **intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC)** of 0.92, confirming strong agreement between raters. Where discrepancies greater than one point occurred, a consensus discussion was conducted to finalise scores.

2.4. Data collection procedure

The research methodology received approval from the ethics committees of both participating universities, confirming adherence to ethical norms for studies involving human subjects. Approval was obtained following the Declaration of Helsinki and local institutional regulations.

Data collection occurred in the second semester of the school year, selected to prevent conflicts with significant examinations and reduce participant stress. Participants were enlisted during standard English classes. Researchers attended classes to elucidate the study's aims, methodologies, and confidentiality protocols. Informed consent was acquired from all participants, who were guaranteed that their participation was voluntary and that all data would remain confidential.

The data collection process was organised in two main phases:

1. **Phase One – Survey Administration:**
   - Participants completed the Language Evaluation Anxiety Scale and the Self-Appraisal Scale during a single 30-minute session in their classrooms. Surveys were administered in paper-and-pencil format to facilitate participation. Each participant was assigned a unique identification code to ensure anonymity while allowing matching of survey and test data later.
2. **Phase Two – Oral English Testing:**
   - Approximately one week after the survey was completed, students participated in the oral English test. Testing took place in dedicated language laboratories to provide a quiet, controlled environment. Sessions were scheduled to minimise interruptions to regular classes. Each student was tested individually. The average duration of the testing session per participant was approximately 8-10 minutes, including instructions and transition time between the individual presentation and interactive dialogue.

Throughout the process, all research staff adhered to protocols for respectful and nonjudgmental interactions with participants. To minimise potential anxiety effects induced by the testing environment itself, efforts were made to create a supportive atmosphere, including friendly greetings and explanations from examiners before the test began.

2.5. Data analysis

Data were analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics version 26.0. Before conducting analysis, all variables were examined for data entry mistakes, outliers, and adherence to normality assumptions. Descriptive statistics, encompassing means, standard deviations, and range values, were computed to summarise participants' results across all measures [30].

Reliability assessments were performed utilizing Cronbach's alpha coefficients to evaluate the internal consistency of the Language Evaluation Anxiety Scale and the Self-Appraisal Scale. Values exceeding 0.70 were deemed satisfactory, signifying robust reliability.

Correlation analyses were performed to examine bivariate relationships among the three main variables. Pearson's correlation coefficients were used, given that preliminary checks indicated normal distributions for the variables involved.

To test the hypothesized mediation model, **Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4)** was employed. This analytical tool enables estimation of indirect effects using **bootstrapping**, a nonparametric resampling method that does not assume a normal distribution of indirect effects [26]. Specifically, the mediation analysis in this study involved:

- **Total effect:** The overall relationship between language evaluation anxiety and oral English performance.
- **Direct effect:** The relationship between language evaluation anxiety and oral English performance after controlling for self-appraisal ability.

- **Indirect effect:** The portion of the effect of anxiety on performance that occurs through self-appraisal.

Bootstrapping with **5,000 resamples** was used to generate **bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals** for indirect effects. An indirect effect was considered significant if its confidence interval did not include zero.

Additionally, **one-way ANOVA** tests were conducted to examine potential differences in anxiety, self-appraisal, and performance scores across different proficiency levels (low, medium, high). Where significant differences were found, post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test were performed to identify specific group differences.

All statistical tests were to be conducted at the $p < .05$ level of significance. It was reported that effect sizes, as partial eta squared (eta squared / 2; 2) in ANOVA or standardised beta coefficients in regressions, indicated the information about the magnitude of effects.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive statistics

It is in this section that a comprehensive description of the descriptive statistics of the main variables that have been used in the study of language evaluation anxiety, self-appraisal ability and oral English performance are presented. These descriptive analyses aim to provide a preliminary idea of how the participants scored on these measures and what kind of a baseline they will serve in further statistical analyses.

The mean values of the language evaluation anxiety experienced by the 200 people was 47.2 (SD = 8.5). The scores of language evaluation anxiety were found to be wide, with a low of 22 and high of 72. It is indicative that these figures denote that principals were moderate to high in terms of nervousness when they were being evaluated in their engagement of English speaking capabilities. Markedly, although some students seemed somewhat at ease with evaluative speaking-type of tasks, the anxiety levels overall fell on the higher side of the scale. This inconsistency highlights that the experience of language anxiety is not universal, as expressed previously by research literature [31]. Moderate to high variability of the level of anxiety suggests that anxiety can likely affect the performance of sure students to a greater degree compared to others during oral assessments.

In self-appraisal ability, the mean was on the higher side with a mean of 35.4 (SD = 5.6) and the scores ranged between 8-50. This indicates that, most students felt comfortable when it came to determining their level of oral language. Even with above-average rates of anxiety, a significant number of participants demonstrated a favourable self-evaluation of themselves during a task concerning their English language proficiency. Nevertheless, the overall distribution of the scores with some participants having higher scores towards the lower staging area, indicates that a smaller group of students did not feel that much about her capability to assess her oral performance. This kind of student can be more susceptible to a reduction in performance due to anxiety, because absence of self-appraisal may result in a reduction and anxiety in the oral assessment.

Regarding the performance on oral English, we received the mean result of 15.3 (SD = 2.8) which is the grade between 9 and 20 of their 20 total grades. This is indicative of the fact that the general oral mastery of the participants was of a medium strength. Nonetheless, the 2.8 standard deviation will imply that there is great variation in the performance. There are those students who scored highly, almost perfectly, and others

who are not able to show their competence. This performance difference further underlines the necessity to pay attention to psychological variables such as anxiety and self-appraisal that could be the causes of the differences in the results of talking. Its findings would imply that actual performance can be significantly determined by psychological factors even in evaluative conditions where the levels of English proficiency are rather high.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Main Variables (N = 200)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Language Evaluation Anxiety	47.2	8.5	22	72
Self-Appraisal Ability	35.4	5.6	18	50
Oral English Performance	15.3	2.8	9	20

3.2. Preliminary data checks

In further evaluation of the inferential analyses there was need to look at data to determine compliance to assumptions necessary in parametric test analysis. These involved inspection of normality, outliers and equality of variance.

There was the use of histograms, skewness, and kurtosis statistics to review the scores distribution per variable. The skewness values of language evaluation anxiety, self-appraisal ability and oral English performance variables ranged between -0.51 and 0.48, whereas, the kurtosis values ranged between -0.73 and 0.62. These values inform that all three variables are close to a normal distribution so we can affirm that the normality assumption has been met.

Further, an equality of variances test (Levene), through checking homogeneity of variance across the proficiency groups of key outcome variables was carried out. Results showed no significant heterogeneity between variances ($p > .05$) and therefore, the assumption of equal variances was correct and as a result, ANOVA analyses would be applicable.

These initial tests gave assurances to run parametric tests such as correlation analysis, mediation test and ANOVA comparisons given that the data complied with pre-requisite conditions regarding these tests.

3.3. Correlation analysis

Pearson correlation was used to determine the relation between the three crucial variables including language evaluation anxiety, capacity to appraise the self, and oral English performance. This analysis was done to establish the relationship between these variables and whether they show any significant relationship.

The correlations in the results, as presented in **Table 2**, revealed that the following correlations were significant:

- The anxiety during language evaluation was also found to have a negative correlation with the self appraisal ability ($r = -.46$, $p < .001$) as well as oral English performance ($r = -.52$, $p < .001$). This implies that the more anxious one becomes, the less able they are to perform well in regards to self-appraisal and oral performance.
- **Self-appraisal ability** had a **positive correlation** with **oral English performance** ($r = 0.59$, $p < .001$), indicating that students who felt more confident in evaluating their oral language skills tended to perform better in oral assessments.

These results provide strong preliminary evidence that **both language evaluation anxiety** and **self-appraisal ability** play significant roles in predicting **oral English performance**. However, correlation

analyses only establish associations and do not determine causality. The next step involved testing whether **self-appraisal ability** mediates the relationship between **language evaluation anxiety** and **oral English performance**.

Table 2. Correlations Between Key Variables of the Study (N = 200)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Language Evaluation Anxiety	—	-0.46	-0.52
2. Self-Appraisal Ability		—	0.59
3. Oral English Performance			—

3.4. Mediation analysis

To test the hypothesis that **self-appraisal ability** mediates the relationship between **language evaluation anxiety** and **oral English performance**, a **mediation analysis** was conducted using **Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4)**. The results of this analysis are depicted in **Figure 1** and summarised below.

Total Effect (c path):

The total effect of language evaluation anxiety on oral English performance was significant ($\beta = -0.32$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < .001$), indicating that anxiety alone accounted for approximately 10% of the variance in performance outcomes ($R^2 = 0.10$). This suggests that language anxiety has a substantial direct impact on oral performance.

Direct Effect (c' path):

After accounting for **self-appraisal ability**, the direct effect of **language evaluation anxiety** on **oral English performance** remained significant ($\beta = -0.20$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .001$). This implies that anxiety still exerts a direct **negative influence** on speaking performance, even when considering self-appraisal.

Indirect Effect (a*b path):

The **indirect effect** of **language evaluation anxiety** on **oral English performance** through **self-appraisal ability** was significant ($\beta = -0.12$, 95% CI [-0.20, -0.06]). This indicates that part of anxiety's negative impact on performance is mediated through reductions in self-appraisal ability. Approximately **37.5% of the total effect** was mediated, suggesting a substantial indirect pathway.

These findings strongly support the hypothesised **mediation model**, providing evidence that **self-appraisal ability** plays a critical role in buffering the detrimental effects of **language evaluation anxiety** on **oral English performance**. These results suggest that **interventions aimed at improving students' self-appraisal skills** could potentially mitigate the adverse impact of anxiety, leading to better performance in oral language tasks.

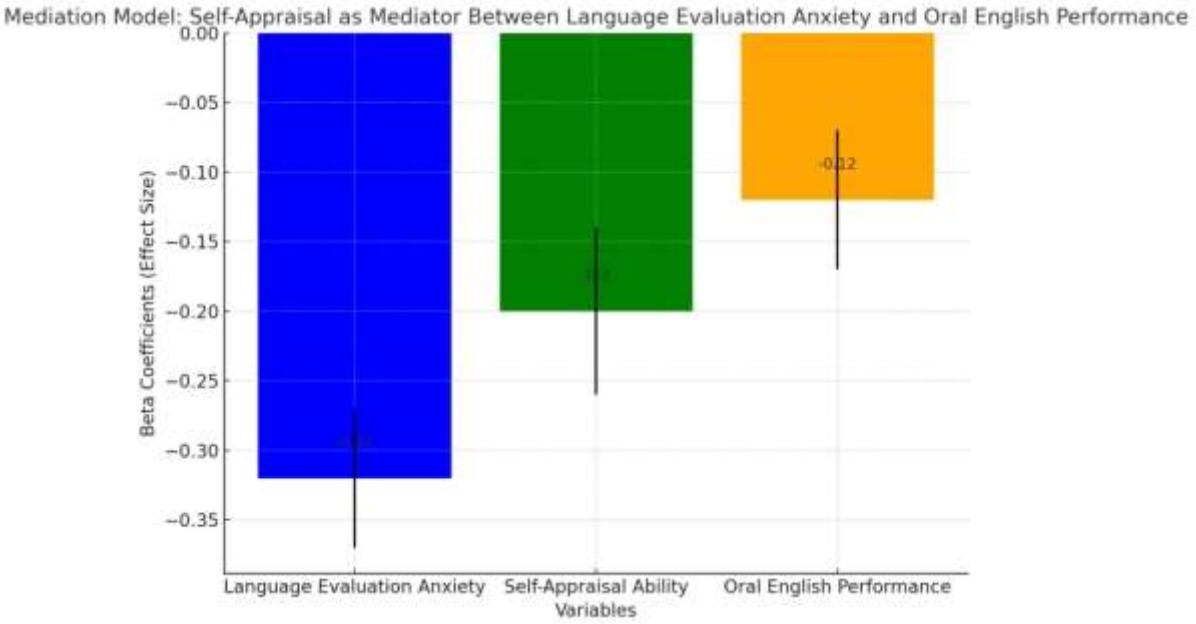

Figure 1. Mediation Model: Self-Appraisal as Mediator Between Language Evaluation Anxiety and Oral English Performance

3.5. Differences across proficiency levels

Participants were categorized into three **proficiency groups** based on their **oral English performance** scores:

- **Low proficiency:** Scores ≤ 12
- **Medium proficiency:** Scores = 13–16
- **High proficiency:** Scores ≥ 17

A **one-way ANOVA** was conducted to examine whether **language evaluation anxiety** differed across these proficiency groups. The results revealed significant differences, with a **moderate effect size** ($F(2, 197) = 14.58$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.129$). Post-hoc comparisons using **Tukey's HSD** test showed that students in the **high proficiency** group reported **significantly lower anxiety** ($M = 42.1$, $SD = 7.2$) than those in the **low proficiency** group ($M = 52.8$, $SD = 6.9$, $p < .001$). Anxiety levels in the **medium proficiency** group were also significantly lower than in the low proficiency group ($p = .004$), though the differences were less pronounced.

A separate **one-way ANOVA** was conducted to assess differences in **self-appraisal ability** across proficiency groups. Significant differences were found ($F(2, 197) = 22.31$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.185$), with students in the **high proficiency** group reporting significantly stronger self-appraisal abilities ($M = 39.2$, $SD = 4.3$) compared to those in the **low proficiency** group ($M = 30.8$, $SD = 5.2$, $p < .001$). Differences between the **medium** and **low proficiency** groups were also significant ($p = .002$).

These results suggest that **higher proficiency students** not only perform better in language assessments but also experience **lower anxiety** and exhibit **stronger self-appraisal** abilities. However, the significant variability observed within each proficiency group highlights the importance of considering individual differences in **anxiety** and **self-perceptions** in predicting **oral performance**. This suggests that proficiency level alone does not fully account for students' psychological responses during evaluative speaking tasks.

The results of this study provide compelling evidence that **language evaluation anxiety** significantly undermines **oral English performance**, both directly and indirectly through **self-appraisal ability**. Higher

self-appraisal abilities seem to **buffer the adverse effects** of anxiety, supporting the notion that improving students' self-evaluation skills could help reduce anxiety and improve performance in oral language tasks. These findings have practical implications for language teaching, suggesting that interventions targeting **self-appraisal** could enhance both **confidence** and **performance** in **high-stakes evaluative contexts**.

4. Discussion

4.1. Interpretation of findings

The results of the study offer great insights into how language evaluation anxiety interacts with self-appraisal ability to affect oral performance in English. The findings indicate that language evaluation anxiety is a significant source of setback to the performance of the students in oral language performance. The strong negative relationship between the language evaluation anxiety and oral English performance (r = -0.52) confirms the hypothesis that anxiety reduces the ability of students to perform on tasks such as oral English tasks. This observation is congruent with other studies that postulate the debilitating nature of anxiety on performance during high-stakes assessment (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

More to the point, this study determined that there exists a significant mediating role of the self-appraisal ability in this relationship. Results of the mediation analysis indicated that language evaluation anxiety severely damaged oral performance, but the capacity to self-appraise was able to buffer these adverse outcomes. More precisely, the indirect effect (beta = -0.12) was strong, and it indicated that nearly 37.5 per cent of the entire impact of the language evaluation anxiety on oral performance was mediated through self-appraisal. These findings suggest that students who feel that they can speak well despite the anxiety they undergo can exhibit a higher rate of performance. This observation is in line with the Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1997), which states that self-efficacy, which is the belief that one can achieve success in a given situation, is essential in the performance outcomes even when there are stressful conditions involved.

The fact that language evaluation anxiety negatively correlates with self-appraisal capacity (r = -0.46) also confirms the assumption that anxiety has a detrimental effect on students' estimation proficiency that can inhibit evaluation performance. Students can develop doubt about themselves as they get more anxious, and this lowers self-confidence and the development of self-evaluation in the student. This conforms to the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) that moves negative sets of emotions like anxiety to increase the affective filter to impede performance and acquisition of language.

The results further show that despite the finding that self-appraisal ability moderates the adverse impact of language evaluation anxiety levels, it left the direct relation between negative anxiety and oral performance (9 = -0.20) significant, even when self-appraisal was considered.

This finding suggests that, although **self-appraisal** is an essential factor, **language anxiety** still exerts a considerable direct influence on performance outcomes. Therefore, interventions aimed at reducing anxiety levels directly could be complementary to those focusing on improving self-appraisal ability.

4.2. Comparison with past research

The results of this study resonate with previous research on the relationship between **anxiety** and **language performance**. **MacIntyre and Gardner (1994)** and **Horwitz et al. (1986)** have established that **language anxiety** hurts performance in **foreign language learners**. However, while earlier studies have primarily focused on the **direct effects** of anxiety, this study offers a **novel contribution** by introducing the **mediating role** of **self-appraisal ability**. The findings underscore the importance of **cognitive** and **emotional** factors in influencing **language performance**, which aligns with the **Social Cognitive Theory** by

Bandura (1997). **Self-appraisal** is central to this theory as it shapes learners' **self-efficacy beliefs**, which in turn affect their **motivation** and **performance**.

Furthermore, this study's findings on **self-appraisal** corroborate those of **Cheng (2002)** and **Tsang (2025)**, who highlighted the role of self-efficacy and self-assessment in language learning. Both of these studies demonstrated that learners with higher **self-efficacy** (a key component of self-appraisal) tend to perform better in language tasks, even in the face of anxiety. The current study builds on this body of research by empirically demonstrating that **self-appraisal** not only influences performance directly but also serves as a **mediator** between **language evaluation anxiety** and **performance**.

Nevertheless, this paper disputes some of the assumptions in previous studies, particularly regarding the homogeneous effect of anxiety. Although a vast literature has been based on viewing language anxiety as a singular phenomenon, the degree of disparity that has been found to exist in responses to anxiety may indicate that individual variations, such as the self-appraisal ability, are essential determinants of the impact of anxiety on performance. This observation implies that in the future, it may be helpful to concentrate more on personal factors in the reaction to anxiety, instead of considering anxiety as a single factor.

4.3. Implications for language education

The findings of the present research are highly relevant to language teaching and assessment. Among the most important findings is that whilst language evaluation anxiety has adverse effects on the performance of oral delivery, self-appraisal ability averts such impact. The language educator can use this insight to practice by introducing self-assessments that will help the students assess their speaking skills regularly. These kinds of activities will not only enhance the level of self-evaluation skills in learners but also boost their self-confidence and self-efficacy, which help to minimise the psychological effect of anxiety during oral assessment.

To illustrate, teachers may present some reflective activities, e.g. self-evaluation rubrics or peer reviewing sessions, in which students evaluate their own or other students' speaking performance based on previously established rubrics. This is to enable students to appreciate their strengths and weaknesses, hence creating a sense of achievement and self-efficacy. Moreover, teachers might develop the training courses aimed at enhancing the self-evaluation skills of the students, which would help them form a more realistic and accurate opinion about their language capabilities.

In addition, as language evaluation anxiety is a good predictor of oral performance, the language teachers might want to investigate ways to reduce anxiety in oral tests. Elaborations like creating a non-threatening environment and not a threatening atmosphere, giving practice on the eve of the actual examination, and awarding positive feedback in the oral examination are some of the strategies that can enable anxiety levels and not cripple performance among students.

4.4. Limitations of the study

Despite the presence of specific valuable resources, the work's deficiencies must be acknowledged. The study employed a cross-sectional design, therefore precluding the establishment of causation. The efficacy of enhancing self-appraisal skills as a direct method for improving performance remains ambiguous, given that mediation analysis indicates that self-appraisal ability mediates the relationship between language evaluation anxiety and oral English performance, suggesting the potential influence of other factors. A longitudinal study could be commissioned in the future to ascertain the impact of changes in self-appraisal over time on language performance about language anxiety.

Secondly, the sample size in this study was limited to university students in China, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other groups or cultures. This would involve examining diverse learner groups to gain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of anxiety and self-assessment in various educational contexts, including groups with differing linguistic backgrounds and varying levels of ability. Third, the authors utilised self-report measures of anxiety and self-assessment, wherein participants often answer following social desirability or distortions in self-perception. In future studies, researchers may incorporate objective data concerning anxiety (e.g., physiological responses such as heart rate or cortisol levels) and performance (e.g., unaided assessments of speaking abilities).

4.5. Future research directions

A few directions concerning future studies should be mentioned based on the current research. Second, to better understand how to use interventions to influence oral English performance, the research should be further investigated. Potential areas of improvement on the specified research include experimental research designs, including randomised controlled trials, which should provide evidence regarding self-appraisal training programs on their ability to reduce anxiety levels and enhance performance in high-stakes oral evaluation.

Third, in future, there ought to be studies into cultural differences regarding how self-appraisal and anxiety influence performance in language matters. In the survey carried out, they were all recruited in China, and the culture of that region focused so much on saving face that anxiety was more likely to be heightened in public speaking situations. Cross-cultural comparisons may provide an answer to how cultural values influence the process of anxiety and self-evaluation by the learners in learning a language.

The inclusion of these variables into comprehensive models would also help clarify the relationship between psychological variables and language learning outcomes.

The findings show that the students with high self-appraisal skills are in a better position to regulate anxiety and show their best in oral activities, even in the case of evaluation. Such findings help to emphasise the necessity of developing self-assessment skills in a language learner and provide valuable suggestions to language teaching procedures. By targeting both anxiety and self-appraisal, teachers will be able to make significant improvements in their students and their performance in oral tests of the English language.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

References

1. Horwitz EK, Horwitz MB, Cope J. Foreign language classroom anxiety. The Modern Language Journal 1986; 70(2):125–132.
2. MacIntyre PD, Gardner RC. The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. Language Learning 1994; 44(2):283–305.
3. Krashen S. Principles and practice in second language acquisition. [Online submission]. 1982.
4. Eysenck MW, Derakshan N, Santos R, Calvo MG. Anxiety and cognitive performance: attentional control theory. Emotion 2007; 7(2):336–353.
5. Wang F, Gao S, Chen B, Liu C, Wu Z, Zhou Y, Sun Y. A study on the correlation between undergraduate students' exercise motivation, exercise self-efficacy, and exercise behaviour under the COVID-19 epidemic environment. Frontiers in Psychology 2022; 13:946896. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.946896.
6. Wang Y, Derakhshan A, Zhang LJ. Researching and practicing positive psychology in second/foreign language learning and teaching: the past, current status and future directions. Frontiers in Psychology 2021; 12:731721. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2021.731721.

7. Abad JV, Arango SO, Restrepo MV. Perceptions of the influence of anxiety on students' performance on English oral examinations. Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos (Colombia) 2021; 17(2):143–167.
8. Heydarnejad T, Tagavipour F, Patra I, Farid Khafaga A. The impacts of performance-based assessment on reading comprehension achievement, academic motivation, foreign language anxiety, and students' self-efficacy. Language Testing in Asia 2022; 12(1):51.
9. Papi M, Khajavy H. Second language anxiety: Construct, effects, and sources. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics 2023; 43:127–139.
10. Mierzwa-Kamińska E. Foreign language enjoyment and foreign language anxiety. InForeign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety Among Polish EFL Students: Theory and Practical Implications for Foreign Language Educators 2025 Apr 9 (pp. 59-84). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
11. Lonon M, Oted J. Utilization of educational YouTube videos: an approach in enhancing junior high school students' oral communication skills. Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives 2024; 2(6):157–165.
12. Shell DF. Outcome expectancy in social cognitive theory: The role of contingency in agency and motivation in education. Theory Into Practice 2023; 62(3):255–265.
13. MacIntyre PD, Gardner RC. The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. Language learning. 1994 Jun;44(2):283-305.
14. Derakshan N, Eysenck MW. Anxiety, processing efficiency, and cognitive performance: New developments from attentional control theory. European psychologist. 2009 Jan;14(2):168-76.
15. Ilmiani AM, Wahdah N, Mubarak MR. The application of Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory: A process in learning speaking skill. Ta'lim al-'Arabiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab & Kebahasaaraban 2021; 5(2):181–192.
16. Hadad S, Watted A, Blau I. Cultural background in digital literacy of elementary and middle school students: self-appraisal versus actual performance. Journal of Computer Assisted Learning 2023; 39(5):1591–1606.
17. Hsieh CN. L2 learners' self-appraisal of motivational changes over time. Issues in Applied Linguistics 2009; 17(1):1–25.
18. Folkman S, Lazarus RS, Dunkel-Schetter C, DeLongis A, Gruen RJ. Dynamics of a stressful encounter: cognitive appraisal, coping, and encounter outcomes. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 1986; 50(5):992–1003.
19. Baratta R, Cavallo D. Sense and sensibility: The role of cognitive appraisal in resident support for cultural events. Event Management. 2025 Mar 11;29(2):167-83.
20. Cheng TY. Taiwanese students' perceived English oral proficiency in relation to communication strategies [PhD thesis]. University of Southern California; 2003.
21. Basri H, Nanda DS, Susanto S. Strategies for mitigating communication anxiety among communication science students during seminar thesis examinations. Iberoamerican Journal of Science Measurement and Communication 2024; 4(3):1–3.
22. Ayeras SR, Bumanlag J, De Guzman BF, Reyes BM, Ruiz AK, Villarama J. Too anxious to speak: assessing the impact of social anxiety on high school students' self-esteem, academic performance, and coping strategies. Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives 2024; 2(7):65–75.
23. MacIntyre PD, Gardner RC. The effects of induced anxiety on three stages of cognitive processing in computerized vocabulary learning. Studies in second language acquisition. 1994 Mar;16(1):1-7.
24. Bandura A. Social-cognitive theory. InAn introduction to theories of personality 2014 Jan 21 (pp. 341-360). Psychology Press.
25. Fattahi Marnani P, Cuocci S. Foreign language anxiety: a review on theories, causes, consequences and implications for educators. Journal of English Learner Education 2022; 14(2):2–15.
26. Tsang A. The relationships between EFL learners' anxiety in oral presentations, self-perceived pronunciation, and speaking proficiency. Language Teaching Research 2025; 29(4):1639–1659.
27. Joshi A, Kale S, Chandel S, Pal DK. Likert scale: explored and explained. British Journal of Applied Science & Technology 2015; 7(4):396–403.
28. King J. Preparing EFL learners for oral presentations preparing EFL learners for oral presentations. Dong Hwa Journal of Humanistic Studies. 2002 Jul;4(1):401-18.
29. Bárkányi Z. Anxiety and virtual learning. Technology-Mediated Language Teaching: From Social Justice to Artificial Intelligence. 2025:137-59
30. Abu-Bader S, Jones TV. Statistical mediation analysis using the Sobel test and Hayes SPSS Process Macro. International Journal of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods 2021; 9(1):1–12.
31. Eastman C, Marzillier JS. Theoretical and methodological difficulties in Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Cognitive Therapy and Research 1984; 8(3):213–229.
32. Gozali A. The adequacy of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis in second language acquisition: a field research in SD Angkasa 2 Medan [Master's thesis]. University of Sumatera Utara; 2017.
33. Smedslund J. Bandura's Theory of self-efficacy: a set of common sense theorems. Scandinavian Journal of Psychology 1978; 19(1):1–4.

Appendix A: Final Questionnaire

Language Evaluation Anxiety and Self-Appraisal Ability Questionnaire

Demographic Information:

1. **Age:** _____

2. **Gender:**
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other
   - Prefer not to answer

3. **English Proficiency Level:**

   - Beginner
   - Intermediate
   - Advanced
   - Native Speaker

Section 1: Language Evaluation Anxiety (Adapted from Horwitz et al., 1986)

Please indicate your level of agreement using the scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

Statement	Rating
1. I feel nervous when I speak English in front of others.	[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5
2. I worry about making mistakes when speaking English.	[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5
3. I often feel anxious before oral English exams.	[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5
4. I feel that people judge my English ability when I speak.	[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5

Section 2: Self-Appraisal Ability (Adapted from Dörnyei, 2005)

Please rate how confident you are in evaluating your own speaking ability:

Statement	**Rating**
1. I can accurately assess my English speaking skills.	[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5
2. I feel confident in my ability to improve my English speaking.	[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5
3. I am able to recognize my strengths and weaknesses in English speaking.	[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5
4. I am good at identifying areas where I need to improve in my spoken English.	[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5

Section 3: Oral English Performance (Self-Assessment)

On a scale from 1 to 20, how would you rate your overall performance in the following areas?

Skill Area	**Rating (1-20)**
Pronunciation	[ ] ___
Fluency	[ ] ___
Vocabulary Usage	[ ] ___
Grammar	[ ] ___
Overall Performance	[ ] ___

Section 4: Open-Ended Questions

1. What factors make you feel most anxious when speaking in English?

2. How do you typically assess your English speaking skills?