



EFL Students' Beliefs on Self-Assessment on Speaking Performance: Case on Indonesian Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract

This research aims to explore student beliefs regarding self-reported feedback on their speaking performances in English classes. It investigates what beliefs students hold about receiving self-assessed evaluations and delves into how these assessments can identify both strengths and weaknesses in English-speaking abilities. Using a qualitative case study approach involving interviews with three highly self-regulated learners, the study highlights the significance of self-assessment for improving speaking skills. While acknowledging that self-assessment has its limitations—such as insufficient English proficiency, restricted practice opportunities, and emotional hurdles—the research emphasizes incorporating external feedback from peers, teachers, or technological tools to enhance learner comprehension of their speaking capabilities. Ultimately, addressing these challenges through integrated teaching methods could optimize the efficacy of self-assessment practices in enhancing language learning outcomes.

Keywords: Self Regulated Learning; Self Assesment; Speaking Performance

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1. Introduction

Self-regulated learning (henceforth SRL) plays a significant role in determining the success of language learning. A great deal of scholarly research have conceptualized Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) (Bai and Wang, 2021; Benraghda et al., 2022; Panadero, 2017; Schunk and Zimmerman, 2008; Seli and Dembo, 2020; Zimmerman, 2013). The key to understanding SRL is self-regulation, which is an autonomous goal-oriented process in which learners create and reconstruct academically acquired task-related skills by modifying their mental abilities (Zimmerman, 2002). This transition includes self-reflective, motivational, and behavioral components of learning (Zimmerman et al., 2015). Moreover, SRL is considered



the students' ability to take control and be responsible for their learning (Rovers et al., 2019; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008).

Pintrich (2004) defined SRL as an active and beneficent process in which students set learning objectives and then work to monitor, control, and regulate their cognition, motivation, and behavior while being constrained by their objectives and the environmental context. What makes a SRL strategy different from other learning strategies is that the students not only consistently activate their behaviors and feelings (Schunk & Greene, 2018; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011), but also pay attention to their abilities and lacks (Zimmerman, 2002). Knowing their lacks, wants and needs, students may also evaluate the suitable strategies that meet their learning objectives (Seli & Dembo, 2020).

Several studies have examined SRL in foreign language learning and teaching. Bai and Wang (2020) revealed that growth mindset, self-efficacy, and intrinsic value in SRL when students study English was positively related. They found that having a growth mindset is a strong predictor of SRL (Bai & Wang, 2020). Moreover, Xiao and Yang (2019) ascertained that SRL can be promoted through the use of formative assessment, and feedback at the process benefits learners the most. In addition, Kim et al. (2015) discovered that SRL strategies were frequently used by highly proficient learners in classroom. Furthermore, the empirical connection between students' level of SRL and learning engagement has been tested by previous studies. Azevedo and Gašević (2019) found that SRL performed by a group of college students has a positive influence on active engagement in blended learning activities and subsequently improves their learning outcome. It was supported by the study of Carter Jr. et al. (2020) which revealed that students with high-level of SRL were more motivated in joining learning activities and successfully met the learning objectives. Additionally, SRL is closely related to the concept of autonomous learning where students are to take full control of their learning strategies and process (Wong et al., 2019).

The use of SRL in speaking skills is regarded as a helpful strategy to cope with speaking anxiety as speaking is considered the most stressful and anxiety-provoking skill for foreign



language learners (Kralova & Tirpakova, 2019). The anxiety is intensely manifested in situations where the language learners need to speak or deliver presentations in public (Liang & Kelsen, 2018), and hence inevitably impedes their communication. In applying SRL, self-assessment is one of the strategies mostly used by English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in addition to peer assessment. Self-assessment is defined as "assessment activities that require students to examine and understand their own learning" (Bourke, 2018, p. 828). As Boud et al. (2013) emphasizes, self-assessment does not just include assessing one's work; instead, it implies that students should consider what good work truly entails. When students self-assess their work, they consider its quality and how it represents the aims (Andrade, 2019).

In spite of extensive research on self-assessments in English learning, limited studies have focused on challenges experienced by high level of SRL students in self-assessing the speaking performance which may lead to cultural or emotional barriers (Andrade, 2021; Boud et al., 2015; Yan et al., 2022). Therefore, this present research attempted to investigate self-assessments performed by English pre-service teachers towards their speaking performance and answer the following questions: What beliefs do the students hold about self-reported feedback on their speaking performance?

2. Method

In this section, the participants and data collection are described and the phases of analyzing the data are discussed. A qualitative case study method was used in this research.

2.1. Setting and participants

This research took place in English Language Education Program of Universitas Mulawarman, Indonesia. The participants of this research were the pre-service English teachers. A purposive sampling was conducted through a Self-Regulated Learning Inventory (Sun, 2022). The sampling technique was used to facilitate group comparisons (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Those having high levels of self-regulated learning were selected to participate in the interview section. The pre-service teachers were selected as they were expected to provide robust understanding and meaningful practices towards the importance of



self-assessments from the perspectives of participants with high level of self-regulated learning. From the selection process through the questionnaire, three female participants were selected. They came from the same batch and were in their fifth semester in English Language Education program as the pre-service teachers. The interview was conducted to three selected participants to dig deep their beliefs and practice in giving self-feedback. Each interview took around one hour and was carried out outside the course hours.

2.2 Research instruments

To obtain the data for this research, an interview protocol and some documents were utilized. The interview was conducted in the form of semi-structured interview where the interview questions were pre-determined with the opportunity for the researchers to explore responses further (Creswell, 2015). The interview covered some questions concerning students' opinion, knowledge, and experience in using self-assessment in a speaking course (see appendix).

2.3. Data collection

Interview

The data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews with three English language learners as the participant 1 (P1), participant 2 (P2), and participant 3(P3). The three participants were interviewed after class hours at the campus. This setting was selected to ensure a comfortable and familiar environment for the participants, allowing them to express their views and opinions freely and with no distraction. The individual interview approach facilitated the interviews' execution within a short timeframe, reducing the risk of participant fatigue while gathering relevant data for the study.

Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was guided by a set of pre-determined questions. These questions aimed to explore the participants' perceptions on self-assessment, the aspects of speaking they focused on, and the challenges they faced in providing self-feedback. The interviews were conducted in a quiet space on campus to reduce noise and interruptions, ensuring the quality of audio recordings. Participants' responses were recorded



using a digital voice recorder with their consent. This method of data collection provided a comprehensive description of their views, enabling thematic analysis of the information obtained.

2.4 Data analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to the guidelines, the six phases of this analysis are: familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). First, the interview results were transcribed verbatim and read several times, simultaneously writing general notes about emergent topics in the data. Second, the data were coded, collating pertinent words, or phrases to each code. In qualitative research, a code means “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence- capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). The coding was selective, in other words, only material relevant to the research questions is coded (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Third, relevant themes and topics in the data were searched for, the themes were determined based on the research questions. As a result of the analysis, several subthemes were created. Fourth, the themes and subthemes were discussed in the research team to increase the reliability of the study. Fifth, the themes and the subthemes were named. Sixth, compelling excerpts from the data were chosen and the research questions were answered based on the analysis.

3. Findings

Case 1

1. The Importance of Self-Assessment

P1 highlighted the value of self-assessment as a tool for personal growth in English speaking skills. She stated:



I like to assess my English speaking skills. Usually, I record my voice when speaking English and then listen to it. If I think the pronunciation is not right, I will repeat it until my pronunciation is right.

Self-assessment was regarded as crucial for identifying strengths and weaknesses. P1 expressed that knowing their abilities provided motivation to improve as seen from her interview data,

Assessing our speaking performance is very important because it will make it easier for us to understand which our strengths and weaknesses. We are also motivated to keep learning and developing in the area of English speaking.

Furthermore, she also emphasized the important role of self-assessment in prioritizing areas for improvement in speaking skills as she asserted, *It is very important to assess ourselves after speaking so that we know the prioritized areas that we can improve.* The data show that the importance of self-assessment in speaking skills is a must for P1 in her speaking performance as it could help her identify the strengths as well as weaknesses to improve in speaking.

2. Speaking Aspects to Assess

P1 mentioned several specific aspects of speaking skills they focus on during self-assessment. In terms of fluency, she shared,

I have a habit of saying 'eeeheh' when I'm speaking. I think it doesn't sound good. I don't think I am fluent enough. So, I really pay attention to that aspect.

Related to pronunciation aspect, she affirmed,

When I pronounce a word or some words, I think it can change the meaning and make it difficult for other people to understand. Therefore, I try to pronounce each word correctly, even though it is quite hard to be native-like.



Moreover, when it came to grammar, P1 remarked the importance of using accurate grammar in her speech. She explained, *While speaking, I sometimes paid attention to the use of grammar that I was using. I had to quickly relate it to time and context.*

The interview data reveal that fluency, pronunciation, and grammar were some of the speaking problems that needed to be focused on in speaking.

3. Challenges in Providing Self-Assessment

There was a mix of feelings reported by P1 when she attempted to give feedback to herself. At the same time, P1 could have insecurity and excitement feelings. She asserted,

When I tried to express my opinion orally, I sometimes felt insecure...shy, but excited and also happy to learn at the same time. So, it's mixed. But it happened when I had to speak in front of other people and of course my lecturer.

A number of challenges of self-assessment were identified which include subjectivity and need for external feedback. P1 felt self-assessment alone might not be sufficient. She remarked, *Honestly, I am a person who really likes to be commented on. So I sometimes ask for feedback from my friends and also use applications to learn speaking English.* Furthermore, Participant 1 believed additional assistance and support from peers of technological tools could be also valuable as she claimed in her interview, *I think feedback using technology like AI really helped me a lot. For example, AI can help provide feedback without feeling embarrassed because no one saw or heard that but myself.*

In brief, Participant 1 agreed on the use of external feedback to deal with the insecurity and shyness she experienced when she required evaluation for her speaking performance.

Case 2

1. The Importance of Self-Assessment

Self-assessment turned out to be an important element in developing and improving her English speaking skills. She believed that self-assessment helped her reflect on her



performance and easily identify her weaknesses to improve. She declared, *If I know my weaknesses, I will train myself to reduce them. I also will try to develop my strength so I can be more confident in speaking.*

Despite its importance, P2 did not really practise how to do self-assessment because of lack of confidence. P2 affirmed, *I don't practise how to give self-feedback often. Sometimes I don't feel very fluent, so I don't feel confident to give feedback on my own English speaking skills.* However, she kept believing that self-assessment was a very useful strategy to use when immediate feedback was needed as shown in P2's interview, *Sometimes I can know my own mistakes when I speak and give feedback right away.* However, she acknowledged that it could be biased and incomplete without external input.

These data demonstrate that P2 believes that self-assessment is important to do, however, due to her lack of confidence; it became the barrier for her to carry out the strategy in her speaking.

2. Speaking Aspects to Assess

P2 identified specific aspects that need to focus on when assessing her English speaking skills. The first important aspect is fluency. She agreed that fluency can be seen through the existing pause while speaking. It was stated in her view, *Fluency can be seen from whether I can speak fluently or not, whether there was a pause when I delivered my speech.* In other word, P2 highlighted the importance of smooth speech delivery without frequent hesitations.

The second aspect to assess is vocabulary. P2 emphasized, *I see whether I use the right vocabulary and whether it is appropriate to the topic.* She believed that self-assessment helped her find out the correct vocabulary used while expressing opinions and thoughts.

In terms of pronunciation, the use of dictionary was very important to P2 since she admitted,



I usually used an online dictionary because it was practical to use, to see whether I have pronounced a word correctly. In an online dictionary, usually there is an example of pronunciation that can easily accessed, so I can follow it.

P2 agreed that when she pronounced words correctly and accurately, other people would understand her and communication would run well.

3. Challenges in Providing Self-Assessment

A number of challenges in providing self-assessment were identified from P2's interview data. The first challenge is limited knowledge of English itself. She found it difficult to provide feedback due to her limited expertise. As she explained, *I can only judge myself with the knowledge I have without knowing if it's right or not. And I think it's kind of a dangerous act as I can say it's right but actually it's wrong.*

The second challenge is related to lack of confidence. Due to her limited English knowledge, this led to the situation where P2 was having lack of confidence to self-assess. It can be seen in her view, *I feel more confident when feedback is given by others than when it comes from myself.* This reveals that P2 would be more confident to identify her strengths and weaknesses with the help from peers or other people.

The last challenge is concerning the limited practice. P2 affirmed,

I rarely give feedback to myself because I had a lot of assignments to do. Giving self-feedback took time as I had to record my voice, listened to it, and then provided feedback. I know it's very important to do if I want to improve my speaking. So I think I really need to manage my time for it.

The interview data show that the incongruence between her beliefs and practice regarding self-assessment strategy.

Case 3

1. The Importance of Self-Assessment



In her interview, P3 stressed the significant role of self-assessment in improving English speaking skills as seen in her view,

I believe the self-assessment practice has improved my speaking skills. I usually got help from technology, an AI tool, and my main focus is on pronunciation and grammar. The tool would easily correct the mistakes I made.

She made an important note in her data that her speaking improvement resulted from her consistency in doing self-assessment.

In terms of consistent practice of self-assessment, P3 added, *We cannot have an instant result, but it has to be done repeatedly to see improvement.* Not only is it important to figure out weaknesses, being able to identify strengths is also crucial since it can help P3 build her confidence and motivation to promote her speaking abilities. P3 agreed on this as explained in the following data, *I am encouraged to speak English despite my weaknesses, but my strengths are the ones that motivate me to improve.*

The strongly confident beliefs from P3 show that by knowing both strengths and weaknesses through self-assessment can help her feel confident and motivated to improve her speaking skills.

2. Speaking Aspects to Assess

Similar to the other participants, P3 identified three aspects during self-assessment, including pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. However, unlike the other participants who had the primary focus on fluency, P3 focused the most on pronunciation as seen in her view, *I listen to my recordings and check the correct pronunciation online. I focused more on pronunciation as I thought this would also influence my fluency.* This statement shows her belief in the connection between pronunciation and fluency in speaking.

Because of her status as an English student, she felt that grammar was another essential aspect to highlight as being a pre-service student she had a responsibility to be able to speak accurately. P3 emphasized,



I believe that I have to be able to speak English accurately with very few mistakes in grammar as I want to be a good model for my future students. Therefore, when listening to my own speaking, I use a grammar checker help to see what went wrong and try to correct it. I usually do that to my speech draft before I perform in front of class.

This view shows P3's strong belief toward her future role as an English teacher who will become a role model for students.

Fluency was the last focus, but it was noted that P3 had a challenge in objectively assessing it as she verified, *Sometimes I feel fluent, but other times I think I'm not fluent enough, so it's hard to assess objectively.* The data reveal that despite her strong belief, P3 still had a doubt in it due to her uncertainty about her own capability in giving self-feedback.

3. Challenges in Providing Self-Assessment

From P3's interview data, it was revealed that she experienced almost similar situations to the other participants. P3 faced several challenges in self-assessment, such as lack of English knowledge, potential bias due to lack of expertise, and feeling of embarrassment. Similar to the other participants, P3 experienced lack of English knowledge in self-assessment practice. She asserted, *With my limited knowledge, I'm not really sure whether I give correct feedback or not.* This shows her limited knowledge of English that became a barrier for her self-assessment practice.

Another challenge P3 was concerned about was her lack of expertise that could lead to unbiased feedback as seen in her view, *I was worried that my self-feedback might not be accurate or sufficient because I have insufficient expertise in English. It might lead to bias in my assessment.* In addition, it was affirmed by P3 that self-feedback was good but not enough, therefore, external feedback from others to avoid biased feedback was also required as she claimed, *Self-feedback is good but not enough. Peer or teacher feedback is needed for a more accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses.*



The last challenge P3 had during her self-feedback practice was the feeling of embarrassment. She believed that self-assessment often evoked feelings of embarrassment and insecurity as she confirmed in her interview, *I feel quite embarrassed because my speaking skills are still lacking compared to others, but I'm also happy and excited to improve.*

The interview findings from three participants with a high level of self-regulated learning highlight the importance of self-assessment in identifying strengths and weaknesses in English speaking. Self-assessment practice is also believed to be able to help them improve their speaking skills. All three participants focused on several speaking aspects including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar in their self-assessment practices. However, in spite of its advantages on the participants' English skills development, challenges such as bias, low confidence, and lack of expertise and knowledge due to limited practice in giving self-feedback, and feeling of embarrassment constrain its effectiveness. The participants stressed the need for external feedback from teachers, peers, or AI tools to accompany self-assessment in order to have a more thorough understanding of their speaking performance.

4. Discussion

It has been revealed from the research findings that self-assessment practice has a significant role in enhancing English speaking skills. All three participants believed that by having a consistent practice of self-assessment, they would be familiar in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses in speaking. Figuring out strengths and weaknesses automatically results in promoting personal growth and building confidence and motivation. However, a number of challenges are believed to exist and become barriers in self-assessment. Therefore, the discussion section explores the importance of self-assessment, speaking aspects to assess, and challenges in its practice.

The Importance of Self-Assessment

There was a consistent belief regarding self-assessment which is considered a valuable strategy for self-improvement and development in English speaking skills. All participants



highlighted its ability to assist them to provide understanding and awareness of strengths and weaknesses as well as the areas requiring improvement. Moreover, the belief on the regular practice of self-assessment that leads to gradual skill enhancement exists from the interview data. For example, one of the participants claimed that her English speaking skill improved through the process of identifying mistakes and correcting them. These findings are in line with some previous studies investigating self-assessment as a potential measurement and a vital component of language learning which enables English learners to monitor their progress and take ownership of their development despite its complex process (Alek et al., 2020; Butler, 2024; Yan et al., 2022). Yan et al.'s (2022) meta-analysis revealed the way learners perceived the self-assessment would lead to its practice and finally affected the self-assessment impact.

In spite of the strong beliefs held by each participant towards the importance of self-assessment, it has not been considered a frequently used method due to the fact that a number of barriers in its application. For example, one of the participants admitted having lack of confidence as well as limited practice of self-assessment, while the other one seemed lack of English knowledge. These present findings echoed some previous studies which imply that learners with lower self-confidence may be reluctant to engage in self-assessment practices (Leach, 2012; Qasem, 2020). The findings make it clear that supportive environments need to be created in order to promote students' awareness of self-assessment practices without the feeling of insecurity or shyness.

Speaking Aspects to Assess

Aspects of speaking skills including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar, or known as accuracy, were the foci of self-assessment practices. Through its practice, the participants used their own speech recordings to ensure there were mistakes that needed to be corrected. For example, accurate pronunciation to minimize miscommunication and misunderstanding was highlighted by P1. In another situation, P3 associated pronunciation advancement to speaking fluency. Zhang and Lu (2024) show their similar findings to this



current study where they claimed that pronunciation is a strong basis for effective communication, therefore is strongly related to fluency.

In terms of grammar or sentence accuracy, two participants believed that having good grammar mistakes must be prioritized in self-assessment practices. This is due to their status as pre-service English teachers who are required to be accurate while using both oral and written English. One of the participants even used an online grammar checker to see whether grammatical errors were made during the speech. Shadiev and Feng's (2023) study revealed a similar way in which the tools including grammar checker tools are very important as accessible resources for self-assessment due to their immediate feedback and independence in language learning.

Both fluency and vocabulary were the aspects to focus while having self-assessment practices. Those two are interrelated as revealed by a number of previous studies (Hilton, 2008; Kahn et al., 2018; Liu, 2021; Sari, 2021; Tong et al., 2022). As a consequence, the findings did not explicitly show the data on vocabulary aspect as much as the other aspects. This is assumed that it is integrated in both fluency and pronunciation. Only one participant claimed that in her self-assessment practice, vocabulary was the focus since it was very important to speak with topic-specific vocabulary (Khabbzbashi, 2013; Nakamata, 2019). In terms of fluency, all participants agreed that it must be the main concern in self-assessment despite their lack of expertise, therefore the use external feedback was strongly required. This finding echoes a previous research by Wang et al. (2024) which identifies fluency as a subjective and multifaceted component of speaking that often requires external evaluation for greater accuracy.

Challenges in Providing Self-Assessment

This present study has revealed significant challenges identified by the participants in their interview, including lack of English knowledge and expertise, lack of confidence in doing self-assessment, lack of objectivity, and emotional challenges such as insecurity and embarrassment. All participants showed the same challenge when they were talking about lack



of knowledge and expertise. This challenge is believed to lead to biased feedback when they self-assess themselves. This finding is in line previous studies with similar results (Boud et al., 2015; Yan et al., 2022).

The emotional barriers were also emphasized by the participants in the practices of self-assessment. When required to self-assess their speaking performance, they felt insecure and embarrassed with the results as they acknowledged that they were frequently unsure with the points they highlighted in the self-assessment. This condition might result in discouraging students from fully engaging in self-assessment practices. This aligns with Andrade et al. 's (2021) study which uncovered that learners may feel susceptible when they have to assess their speaking performance on their own as they perceive themselves as lacking those assessed areas.

Another challenge which results from the other previously mentioned challenge is lack of confidence. Due to the lack of knowledge and expertise in English, it leads to the students' lack of confidence in giving feedback to their speaking performance. Thus, the interrelated challenges underline the role of external feedback to supplement self-assessment practices. All participants believed that their self-assessment would yield better results when combined with other methods such as peer feedback or teacher feedback, or technological tools, such as grammar checker. Those assisting methods are believed to be more reliable, objective, and insightful compared to self-assessment alone. For instance, P1 highlighted the utility of AI tools for providing non-judgmental feedback, whereas P2 expressed a preference for teacher feedback due to its perceived credibility. These findings align with the research of Yan et al. (2023), which suggests that external feedback enhances learners' self-assessment by providing additional perspectives and reducing bias.

5. Conclusion

The vital role of self-assessment in language learning, particularly in speaking performance, have been revealed in the present study. However, it is not without limitations. All challenges such as lack of English knowledge and expertise, limited practice, and emotional barriers need to be addressed in classroom practices to maximize the effectiveness of self-



assessment. Furthermore, external feedback from peers, teachers, or technology, should be incorporated into the use of self-assessment since it enables learners to develop a more comprehensive understanding of their speaking ability. Therefore, future researchers should explore more strategies to overcome these challenges with the inclusion of more participants from different disciplines with diverse genders and age ranges. In addition, teachers' role in classroom as a facilitator who guides learners to train themselves in self-assessment practices need to be involved in future research. Moreover, this present study is limited only to three participants with limited data. Therefore, future researchers are expected to contribute more by selecting a bigger sample size in order to gain perspectives from participants with different levels of self-regulated learning.

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