

The Application of CSE Self-Assessment Scale for Oral Expression in Collage English Course for Non-English Majors

Xiaoyu Han

School of Foreign Languages, Beijing Forestry University, Beijing 100083, China

Abstract: *Self-assessment can effectively improve students' English proficiency in EFL. One of the design purposes of the China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE) self-assessment scales is to serve as a learning tool for self-diagnosis. However, the researches on the application of CSE self-assessment scales in college English courses and the researches focusing on oral expression are inadequacy. Therefore, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of the CSE self-assessment scale for oral expression applicated in collage English courses. 80 students participated in a quasi-experiment. Correlation analysis indicated that the self-assessment based on the CSE scale reflects students' actual English oral proficiency and 8-week application of the CSE scale improved students' self-assessment accuracy. Moreover, the results of independent-samples t-test demonstrated that the improvement in English oral performance among the experimental group who engaged in self-assessment was significantly greater than that of the control group. In conclusion, the study confirms the utility of the CSE self-assessment scale for oral expression in college English courses, particularly for enhancing oral skills among non-English major students, as well as highlights the positive impact of regular.*

Keywords: Self-assessment; Oral proficiency; China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE); College English; EFL.

1. Introduction

Self-assessment can effectively facilitate learning [1], enhance the engagement of learners, and cultivate their learning autonomy, thereby reducing the burden on teachers and promoting students' learning outside the classroom. However, some researchers [2] argue that students cannot evaluate their language abilities as accurately as teachers, while some studies have found that the accuracy of students' self-assessment of their language abilities is influenced by their actual language proficiency [3]. Thus, the effectiveness of self-assessment has been recognized by the majority of researchers, while the current discussions on self-assessment are primarily focused on its accuracy.

Self-assessment rubrics can provide standards for self-assessment. When students use clear rubrics or scales for self-assessment, they can more accurately evaluate their own oral performance and self-assessment actually has a positive impact on improving learners' language awareness and oral expression skills [4].

The China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE) represents the first comprehensive competency framework in China that spans across all educational levels for the teaching, learning, and assessment of English, facilitating self-assessment among learners and the establishment of learning objectives [5]. It includes self-assessment scales with an all-encompassing description of language

abilities across eight dimensions, including listening, reading, speaking, writing, translation (both written and oral), organizational capacity, and pragmatic competence [6]. Specifically, the self-assessment scale is “developed based on the general scale and corresponding sub-competency scales, taking into account the characteristics and needs of self-evaluation by learners and users”, and can serve as a tool for self-assessment by learners.

Currently, much of the research on the CSE scales focus on theoretical exploration [7], with relatively fewer studies on the application of the CSE scales [8]. In the empirical researches on the application of CSE, in terms of specific language proficiency types, there are more applied studies on reading, writing, and listening skills, but research involving oral expression skill is relatively rare [8]. Therefore, this study aims to applicate the CSE self-assessment scales for oral expression in the college English course, in order to explore the effectiveness of the CSE self-assessment scales in the EFL learning process.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Researches on Self-Assessment in EFL

Self-assessment is defined as a metacognitive process wherein learners critically evaluate their own attributes, competencies, and performance outcomes, either through individual reflection or social interaction. The purpose of self-assessment is to help learners understand the achievements they have made within a certain period and the potential achievements they can attain in the future, thereby facilitating learning [9].

Ünaldı offers significant empirical evidence regarding the predictive validity of self-assessment in evaluating the language proficiency of EFL learners [10]. The study highlights the complementary relationship between self-assessment and teacher assessment, demonstrating that while both assessment modalities exhibit significant correlations with learners’ actual proficiency levels, teacher assessment demonstrates greater predictive validity. This finding has particular implications for the implementation of self-assessment rubrics in oral proficiency evaluation, suggesting that while self-assessment serves as a valuable diagnostic tool, its efficacy may be enhanced through integration with teacher assessment for more reliable proficiency measurement.

Babaii et al. conducted a study with 29 EFL learners and 6 EFL teachers as participants, assessing oral performance through audio recordings and having the participants conduct self-assessments before and after being provided with scoring criteria [11]. The results revealed significant differences in the learners’ assessments on the two occasions, indicating that clear scoring criteria and practice sessions help to reduce the mismatch between learners’ self-assessments and teachers’ assessments. Furthermore, the learners positively evaluated the effectiveness of oral self-assessment through the reflection papers. The study highlights the potential of using self-assessment as a formative evaluation tool in language teaching, as well as its role in enhancing learners’ learning autonomy and engagement.

Zhang and Zhang examine the effects of self-assessment in Chinese tertiary EFL writing classes through a quasi-experimental study [12]. Comparing the writing performance between the self-assessment and peer assessment groups, the researchers identified significant improvements in both holistic writing performance and assessment accuracy among students engaged in self-assessment practices. These findings suggest that systematic implementation of self-assessment protocols can substantially enhance both writing proficiency and evaluative competence in EFL contexts.

In summary, self-assessment represents a critical component in EFL, serving as both a diagnostic and developmental tool for learner competence evaluation. The above researches underscore the utility in the EFL context, where it functions not only as a reflective practice but also as a mechanism for improving language proficiency. Empirical evidence suggests that self-assessment contributes to academic development [13], promotes learner engagement, fosters autonomous learning capabilities [14], reduces instructional workload, and facilitates extracurricular learning. These findings underscore the pedagogical value of integrating self-assessment practices within EFL curricula.

2.2 The Application of Self-Assessment Based on CSE Scales

In the application research of the CSE scales, the topics involving student self-assessment are the most abundant, with two main types of related applications: one uses the CSE for students to diagnose their own abilities and provides recommendations for teaching and learning based on the results; the other examines the efficacy of self-assessment practices and their determining factors through the lens of the CSE [8].

Some studies incorporate self-assessment based on the CSE as a part of formative evaluation. Pan et al. developed and implemented pre-writing ability and post-writing strategy self-assessment instruments, grounded in the CSE scales, within an online diagnostic platform [15]. They validated the effectiveness of the self-assessment forms through confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The research found that the incorporation of CSE self-assessment not only helps students understand their current ability levels and enhances their awareness of autonomous learning, but also enables teachers to refine instructional objectives and optimize curriculum design. This dual functionality provides empirical support for the enhancement of pedagogical practices.

In a comprehensive examination of CSE scale integration in academic writing instruction, Zhang and Wang investigated the implementation of these scales in collegiate English writing courses, with particular attention to their impact on writing proficiency and self-assessment accuracy [16]. The research demonstrates that the CSE scales, when used as a self-assessment tool, provide learners with clear criteria for evaluating their writing skills, leading to significant improvements in writing performance. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of clear and specific learning goals in the self-assessment process. Some researchers have utilized CSE scales to investigate the effectiveness of self-assessment and the factors that influence it. These investigations typically involve the development of self-assessment instruments derived from CSE descriptions tailored to students' proficiency levels. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of students' self-assessment results and their test scores, they explore the validity of students' self-assessment of language abilities and the factors that affect the evaluation [8].

It has been found that students can effectively assess their English abilities using the CSE scales, but the effectiveness of this assessment can be influenced by various factors, such as the specificity of the self-assessment tasks, the proficiency level of the descriptors used in self-assessment, and the students' language proficiency levels [17].

Based on the aforementioned findings, some researchers have suggested that teachers should make reasonable use of the CSE scales to guide students in self-assessment and provide effective analysis and feedback after the students complete the self-assessment, which can help correct potential self-assessment errors, and subsequently understand students' English proficiency to carry out targeted teaching.

The research subjects of CSE studies cover students from primary school, middle school to university. Among them, there is more research at the tertiary level [8]. However, there is currently insufficient research on the use of the CSE self-assessment scale in college English oral expression. Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of students' self-assessment on their English oral performance based on the CSE self-assessment scales.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

This study focuses on the application of CSE self-assessment scales on oral expression in the college English course, it addresses two questions:

Research Question 1: Can the self-assessment results based on CSE scales reflect the actual oral proficiency of students?

Research Question 2: Can the continuous self-assessment affect students' oral proficiency?

3.2 Participants

The participants are 80 first-year non-English major students at a university in Beijing, while the college English course is a required course for them. The participants' English proficiency is relatively consistent, because students who passed the college entrance examination entered the same university as they have just completed the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) and are all preparing for the CET-4. But there is still a certain gap in their oral proficiency, as NMET in different provinces have different requirements in terms of speaking skills.

In order to verify the application effect of the CSE self-assessment scale for oral expression in the classroom, controlled experiment is used in this study. The oral homework for the experiment group, from 5 classes in different majors, combines an around 60s record and a self-assessment questionnaire. There is also a controlled group including 4 classes, which is only needed to submit the record without self-assessment. The initial speaking proficiency of the experimental group has the same level of the control group.

3.3 Data Collection

In order to verify the application effect of the CSE self-assessment scale for oral expression in the classroom, controlled experiment is used in this study. The oral homework for the experiment group combines an around 60s record and a self-assessment questionnaire, while the controlled group is only needed to submit the record without self-assessment.

The experiment lasts eight weeks while an oral homework was assigned each week, while the speaking topics are different by combining the teaching syllabus of college English and the self-assessment scale for oral expression. The topics in first week's pretest and the last week's posttest are same for a better comparison, which is "How do you take the loss of beloved ones? (Please give a record around 60s)", related to the unit 2 "Mixed feelings" in the textbook *New Standard College English – An Integrated Course in Real Communication 2*, and corresponded to level 5 in the CSE scale. Other topics are related to the other units in the textbook, and corresponded to level 5-8. What's more, there are two cycles in other six weeks, each of which includes three weeks' homework with different topics in level 7-8, level

5-6, and level 4 separately. What's more, the experiment group needs to complete the self-assessment based on CSE self-assessment scale for oral expression after submitting the homework each week. The students in the experiment group need to conduct a total of eight self-assessments, including six self-assessment questionnaires that are modified according to the homework topics, and two self-assessment questionnaires completed after the pre-test and post-test which are the complete version of the original CSE oral self-assessment scale without any modification.

The pre-test and post-test scores of all participants and the self-assessment questionnaires of the experimental group for the pre-test and post-test are collected in this study as the research data for analysis. The specific analysis process will be explained in the next part.

3.4 Data Analysis

In addressing the RQ1, this study compares students' self-assessment levels with their actual oral performance levels to examine the accuracy of self-assessment. In other words, the study conducts a correlation analysis between the pre-test self-assessment results and the pre-test oral performance levels, as well as between the post-test self-assessment results and the post-test actual oral performance levels. The correlation coefficient between the self-assessment results and the actual levels is calculated to evaluate the consistency of self-assessment. A high correlation between self-assessment and actual scores indicates a high degree of accuracy in self-assessment. Pearson correlation analysis is employed as both variables in the study are interval variables.

To address the RQ2, the difference analysis is used by comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group separately. Because there is no significant difference in initial English speaking proficiency between the experimental group and the control group, the study directly compared the post-test oral performance scores of the experimental group and the control group. The independent-samples t-test is used in this study as the dependent variable of this study is a fixed distance variable and there are two independent groups of participants, to compare whether there is a significant difference in the mean between the two groups. The study used IBM Statistics SPSS 26 to conduct the independent-samples t-test on the post-test oral performance of the experimental group and the control group, in order to check whether the experimental group, which conducted weekly oral comprehension self-assessment after finishing the oral task, showed a more significant improvement in oral expression performance compared to the control group in the post-test.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Accuracy of Students' Self-Assessment on Oral Expression

Pearson correlation is analyzed by using IBM Statistics SPSS 26 on students' pre-test oral self-assessment levels and pre-test oral performance levels graded by the trained raters. It can be shown from Table 1 that there is a significant high positive relationship between students' pre-test self-assessment level and pre-test performance level ($r = 0.419$, $p < 0.05$). It is indicated that there is a robust relationship between self-assessment and actual performance at the pre-test stage.

The analysis then progresses to the post-test, where a similar comparison is made between students' self-assessment levels and their post-test performance levels. The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted on students' post-test oral self-assessment levels and post-test oral performance levels graded by the trained raters. Table 2 shows that there is a significant high positive relationship between students' post-test self-assessment level and post-test performance level ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.05$).

From Table 1 and Table 2, it can be found that the Pearson correlation coefficient of the post-test is higher than that of the pre-test, which means that the correlation between students' self-assessment results in the post-test and their actual oral performance in the post-test is stronger than that between their self-assessment results in the pre-test and their actual oral performance in the pre-test. This suggests that the relationship between self-assessment and actual performance has not only persisted but has also strengthened after students made self-assessments based on the CSE scales for oral expression.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis Results of Students' Pre-Test Self-Assessment and Pre-Test Performance Levels

		Pre-Test Self-Assessment Level	Pre-Test Performance Level
Pre-Test Self-Assessment Level	Pearson Correlation	1	.419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	40	40
Pre-Test Performance Level	Pearson Correlation	.419**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	40	40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis Results of Students' Post-Test Self-Assessment and Post-Test Performance Levels

		Post-Test Self-Assessment Level	Post-Test Performance Level
Post-Test Self-Assessment Level	Pearson Correlation	1	.715**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Post-Test Performance Level	Pearson Correlation	.715**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The increase in the correlation coefficient from the pre-test to the post-test could indicate that the students have become more adept at accurately self-assessing their oral expression skills. It is a result of increased self-awareness and a better understanding of the criteria for effective oral communication gained through the course of the study. It is consistent with the findings from Wang's research that the use of rubrics can guide students through the stages of self-regulated learning [18].

The cyclical process of self-assessment and reflection contributes to the students' growing adeptness at self-evaluation, as they continuously refine their understanding of the evaluative criteria and adjust their self-assessments accordingly. As students become more familiar with the design features of rubrics or self-assessment scales and learn to apply them effectively, their self-assessments are likely to converge closer to their actual performance levels, thereby increasing the correlation coefficient. Therefore, the students become more proficient at aligning their self-assessment with the actual performance metrics, which aligns with the observed increase in the correlation coefficient.

To sum up, the Pearson correlation analysis provides compelling evidence of the growing alignment between students' self-assessment and their actual oral performance levels after making continuous self-assessment based on CSE scales.

4.2 The Impact of Continuous Self-Assessment on Students' Oral Expression

Independent samples t-tests were conducted on the post-test performance levels of all participants by using SPSS. Table 3 presents the inferential statistics for the independent samples t-test, reporting the results of the test for equality of variances (Levene's Test for Equality of Variances), the t-value (t), degrees of freedom (df), significance (Sig.(2-tailed)), and mean difference. According to Table 3, the significance of the test for equality of variances is 0.738, which is greater than 0.05, indicating homogeneity of variances. Therefore, the first row's t-value (3.444), degrees of freedom (78), significance (0.001), and mean difference (0.625) are considered. The results show that the significance of the independent samples t-test (0.001) is less than the predetermined level of significance of 0.05, demonstrating that continuous self-assessment has a significant impact on students' oral performance.

Table 3: Independent Samples Test Result of Students' Post-Test Performance

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differ- ence	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Post- Test Perform- ance	Equal variances assumed	.113	.738	3.44 4	78	.001	.625	.181	.264 .986
	Equal variances not assumed			3.44 4	73.5 58	.001	.625	.181	.263 .987

Table 4 shows that students making weekly self-assessment based on CSE scales after finishing the oral tasks were significantly different from the students who were not making any self-assessment on the post-test performance ($t(78) = 3.444$, $p < 0.05$). Inspections of the two group means indicate that the post-test performance level of the experiment group is slightly higher than the post-test performance of the control group while the difference between the means is 0.625 points on a 9-point level scale.

The analysis results from the independent samples t-test indicate that among students with the same initial level of spoken English proficiency, those in the experimental group who engaged in self-assessment over the course of eight weeks showed greater improvement in their oral skills compared to the control group participants who did not engage in self-assessment. It suggests that the act of self-assessment not only heightens students' awareness of their oral competencies but also actively contributes to the refinement of their oral expression skills through the continuous training on self-assessment [11].

Table 4: Comparison of Students' Post-Test Performance

	Experimental Group (N=40)		Controlled Group (N=40)		MD	t (78)
	M	SD	M	SD		
Post-Test Performance	5.63	.705	5.00	.906	.625	3.444*

* $p < 0.05$

However, compared with the controlled group's post-test oral performance, the experimental group's post-test oral performance showed limited difference from the control group, thus the further research is still required to prove the effectiveness of CSE self-assessment scales on students' oral expression in the college English course.

5. Conclusion

The study explores the application of the CSE self-assessment scales in college English courses for non-English majors, with a specific focus on oral expression. It addresses the accuracy of students' self-assessment using the CSE scales and the impact of continuous self-assessment on students' oral proficiency.

The findings from the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between students' self-assessment levels and their actual oral performance, both at the pre-test and post-test stages, while the correlation coefficient increased from the pre-test to the post-test, indicating improved accuracy in students' self-assessment abilities over time. At the same time, it proves that the scoring rubrics are important in self-assessment [19-20]. A scientifically unified and effective evaluation standard is essential for learners, teachers, and researchers, while the CSE scales can fill this gap perfectly [16]. The self-assessment descriptions and the criteria of the scales can help learners improve their learning awareness, reflect the learner centered learning philosophy, encourage learners to plan their own learning routes, take responsibility for learning, and transform passive learning into active learning [5]. The integration of CSE scales is anticipated to provide students with a structured and reflective approach to evaluating their own oral proficiency, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement.

Besides, there are some limitations in the study. This study only used quantitative data, thus in the future, further qualitative data can be combined, for example the interviews with students, to comprehensively explore the effectiveness of the CSE oral self-assessment scales in improving English speaking performance. What's more, the duration of the experiment is relatively short, and the changes in English oral expression levels of the experimental group students were not significant enough compared to the control group students. Therefore, the future research can extend the experimental duration to explore the effectiveness of CSE self-assessment scales for oral expression.

References

- [1] D. Boud and N. Falchikov (1989). Quantitative studies of student self-assessment in higher education: A critical analysis of findings. *Higher education*, vol. 18, no.5, p.529-549.
- [2] M. Patri (2002). The influence of peer feedback on self-and peer-assessment of oral skills. *Language testing*, vol.19, no.2, p.109-131.
- [3] L. K. Heilenman (1990). Self-assessment of second language ability: The role of response effects. *Language testing*, vol.7, no.2, p.174-201.
- [4] E. Babaii, S. Taghaddomi, and R. Pashmforoosh (2016). Speaking self-assessment: Mismatches between learners' and teachers' criteria. *Language Testing*, vol.33, no.3, p.411-437.
- [5] J. Liu (2017). China's Standards of English and Its Applications in English Learning. *Foreign Languages in China*, no.6, p.4-11.
- [6] X. Gu, Y. Duan and Z. Chen (2022). Assessing the Validity of the CSE Self-Assessment Scale for Listening Proficiency. *Foreign Languages Bimonthly*, No.4, p.1-9.
- [7] J. Liu and B. Han (2018). Theoretical considerations for developing use-oriented China's Standards of English. *Modern Foreign Languages*, vol.1, p.78-90.
- [8] M. Zheng and S. Wu (2023). A Review of the CSE Application Research: Status Quo and Suggestions. *Journal of China Examinations*, no.2, p.56-63.
- [9] A. D. Oscarson (2009). Self-Assessment of Writing in Learning English as a Foreign Language: A Study at the Upper Secondary School Level. Göteborg: Geson Hylte Tryck.
- [10] İ. Ünalı (2016). Self and teacher assessment as predictors of proficiency levels of Turkish EFL learners. *Assessment & evaluation in higher education*, vol.41, no.1, p.67-80.

- [11] E. Babaii, S. Taghaddomi and R. Pashmforoosh (2016). Speaking self-assessment: Mismatches between learners' and teachers' criteria. *Language Testing*, vol.33, no.3, p.411-437.
- [12] X. S. Zhang and L. J. Zhang (2022). Sustaining learners' writing development: Effects of using self-assessment on their foreign language writing performance and rating accuracy. *Sustainability*, vol.14, no.22, p.14686.
- [13] J. S. Shrauger and T. M. Osberg (1981). The relative accuracy of self-predictions and judgments by others in psychological assessment. *Psychological Bulletin*, vol.90, no.2, p.322.
- [14] J. Peng (2002). A research on learner autonomy in College English Teaching. *Foreign Language World*, no.3, p.15-19.
- [15] M. Pan, J. Song and H. Deng (2019). Developing and validating the self-assessment scales in an online diagnostic test of English writing. *Foreign Language Education in China*, no.4, p.33-41.
- [16] W. Zhang and X. Wang (2022). The Application of CSE in Students' Self-Assessment in a College English Writing Course: From the Perspective of Dynamic Assessment Theory. *Foreign Languages in China*, no.1, p.71-78.
- [17] L. Zhu (2020). Polytechnic school students' self-assessment of English reading ability based on CSE. *Foreign Language Testing and Teaching*, no.4, p.43-50.
- [18] W. Wang (2017). Using rubrics in student self-assessment: student perceptions in the English as a foreign language writing context. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol.42, no.8, p.1280-1292.
- [19] D. Boud (1995). *Enhancing learning through self-assessment*. London: Kogan Page.
- [20] Huang, Y., & Tan, Q. (2024). Digital Humanities and Cultural Identification of Prefecture-Level Cities in China and Sustainable Development: A 3-Year Empirical Study (2021-2023) on Digital-Based Literary Narration in Short Videos. *Trends in Sociology*, 2(2), 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.61187/ts.v2i2.104>