



## The Comparative Effect of Self-Assessment and Peer-Assessment on Speaking Ability and Anxiety of Students of Psychology

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### Abstract

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students assume that the speaking ability is the most challenging skill to learn English because the English learning class and the environment are unsupportive to the students to speak in English. Communication is the most important facet of language learning both in EGP (English for General Purposes) and ESP contexts to realize how much anxiety can impact language learners' communication. This study aimed at comparing the impact of self- and peer-assessment on ESP Students' speaking ability and speaking anxiety. In order to carry out this study, 60 second-semester students of psychology were chosen among 90 students from Azad University of Zanjan to participate in this study using quasi-experimental and comparative design. These participants were divided into experimental groups A and B. Both groups took PET (Preliminary English Test) speaking test and speaking anxiety questionnaire at the outset of study. Then, the treatments were embarked upon by the two groups: experimental Group A received self-assessment speaking instruction while the second group exercised peer-assessment speaking instruction. The course took eight weeks. Afterwards, PET speaking test and speaking anxiety questionnaire were again given to the two groups. Finally, the scores gained on these two instruments, on both groups and on pre- and post-tests were analyzed and compared. ANCOVA ( $F(1, 57) = 12.43, p = 0.003$ ) revealed that self-assessment is more effective than peer-assessment to improve speaking ability and reduce speaking anxiety of ESP students. This study has pedagogical implications for EAP and ESP instructors in implementation of both self- and peer-assessment to teach speaking.

*Keywords:* EAP, ESP, speaking ability, speaking anxiety, peer-assessment, self-assessment

### 1. Introduction

Communication is the aim of learning a second language (SL), and it is the most important facet of language learning to realize how much anxiety can impact on the language learners' communication performance. According to Brown and Yuke (1983), speaking is the ability to judge students in real-life situations. In the same vein, as Brown (2001) argues, speaking skill is not a single ability, but is an interactive process to construct meaning that comprises producing, receiving, and then processing

information. As Kashan and El Naggar (2000) note, providing an efficient atmosphere for students makes it possible for speakers to talk fluently and communicate easily. This encouraging atmosphere lets learners speak fluently without fear and apprehension. Anxiety is one of the factors that impacts the language learners' performance. Moreover, individuals learning an ESL (English as Second Language) are often judged on their communication skills.

Many EFL teachers believe that assessment is a crucial element to develop the students' ability to evaluate their own performance leading to its improvement. Some scholars believe that assessment is the engine which drives the students' learning (Li et al., 2024). Well-designed assessment can encourage active learning especially when the assessment delivery is innovative. Peer and self-assessment can foster a number of skills, such as speaking, reading, writing, reflection, critical thinking and self-awareness as well as giving learners some insights into assessment process (Li et al., 2024).

Due to its emphasis on using real-world contexts, identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses, fostering human judgment, and utilizing open disclosure of principles and rating standards, assessment can actually be applied as a useful strategy to develop learning various facets of a foreign or second language (Ashraf & Mahdinezhad, 2015; Namaziandost et al. 2023).

One of the newer forms of assessment that language learners use to explore, improve, and comprehend their functionality is self-assessment (Ma and Winke, 2019). Students are more effective when they independently participate in behaviors that govern their desire to learn, such as planning what to learn and reviewing the subject matter (Wong et al., 2021).

The literature in the field of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) or English for specific purposes (ESP) in higher education has strongly indicated that self-assessment of both receptive and productive language skills empowers learners to improve their foreign language proficiency, increases student motivation, and raises learner autonomy (Stognieva, 2015). In the early 1990s, the start of alternative assessments including peer-assessment (henceforth referred to as PA) and self-assessment (henceforth referred to as SA) triggered new opportunities for language education, classes, and evaluation. Hargreaves, Earl, and Schmidt (2002) mentioned that these alternative assessment methods stimulate learners to be more responsible for their own learning, to engage in realistic activities that identifies and stimulate learners' abilities to generate and use an extensive knowledge range, and to make assessment an essential chunk of the learning experience.

According to Boud and Falchikov (2007) and Wanner and Palmer (2018), we are in a situation where flipped classrooms, flexible learning, student-driven learning, and collaborative learning are important issues in higher education. Assessment has remained an essential part of the learning experience for students, but has changed from assessment processes constructed and merely utilized by the teacher to those made for student engagement and impoverished in flexible assessment practices. Consequently, there is growing interest in and application of the SA and PA in university courses.

Nevertheless, the literature also shows that the implementation of SA and PA is difficult, and involving students in those types of activities is challenging to both students and teacher. Recent research about flexible learning and assessment by Wanner and Palmer (2018) has revealed that issues of bias, trust and capability play on students' minds during SA and PA activities.

With increasing interest, SA and PA still remain at the margins of assessment practices in higher education. It is still the norm that teachers preserve all the ownership and power in the assessment

procedure and make all the choices, however this limits the potential of student development through the assessment process (Spiller, 2012).

Language instructors can have a clear image of individual performance in group work through peer evaluation (Cheng & Warren, 2000, as cited in Zundert, Sluijsmans, & Merrienboer, 2010), to better inform SA practices in the EFL contexts, the researchers of this study were interested in investigating the response and attitude of Iranian EFL learners towards SA practices. EFL researchers have indicated that the implementation of peer evaluation in English learning will enhance the ability of students to learn English skills, as well as other language skills (Alshammari, 2016; Shams & Tavakoli, 2014; Zhao, 2014).

Several researchers (e.g., Alderson, 2005; Alibakhshi & Shaharaki-pour, 2014; Freeman & Lewis, 1998; Patri, 2002,) believe that SA enables learners to learn a language, but what is disappointing is that SA has not yet been attempted in many areas of language teaching (Abbaszadeh, 2012). In other words, it is not clear if SA has a positive or negative effect on the speaking of EFL learners' fluency and accuracy. According to Chen (2008, as cited in Javaherbakhsh, 2010), instructors have to prepare the required support for their learners to develop knowledge by active participation in evaluating their level of competence and encouraging them to monitor their own learning, the aim is to lead to knowledge and comprehension of the benefits and drawbacks of SA and PA.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Speaking Ability

A large number of learners are studying a language, particularly English, in order to improve communication skills by speaking it (Richards & Renandya, 2002, as cited in Griffiths, 2008). Therefore, it is clear, that the primary purpose of learning a foreign language is for the learner to be able to speak it fluently (Hanifa, 2018). Communication anxiety is one factor that promotes foreign language anxiety in the classroom. Horwitz et al. (1986) believed that people with communication apprehension generally have difficulty talking to others and it is safe to assume that in any EFL communication, highly anxious students might experience much fear.

Kuning (2022) stated that, speaking is the ability of people in talking English that used to deliver information with fluency and good pronunciation. It is supported by Chaney in Tridinanti (2019) who states that, speaking is the process of interaction between two or more people which involve producing, receiving, and processing information.

As Hanifa (2018) noted, a number of studies have confirmed that doing comprehensive speaking like a presentation performance in public can be more challenging and tends to create more anxiety than holding a conversation. He mentioned that communication fears were the biggest barrier to success for students with average performance because they could not control the fear of speaking in front of a group. Other investigators (Rahman, 2017; Raja, 2017) also have discovered that it is usually more difficult to conduct a speaking role on your own than to do it with colleagues because you cannot rely on peer help in the former case. As students feel the challenge will be more difficult to cope with, their anxiety will greatly rise. This means that having to perform individually makes students more nervous because they do not get any feedback and input that will help them enhance their results. Kasbi and Shirvan (2017) found that if students got sufficient feedback from others, the errors made by students would also promote their language learning.

Another study by Mestan (2017), which established Turkish students' sources of anxiety, revealed that most of the public schools that teach English did not encourage oral communication but concentrated on school examinations. Such conditions lead large numbers of students to become nervous while speaking because they do not receive opportunities in their education system to learn to talk in public fully.

## 2.2. Anxiety

Generally, anxiety is regarded as a type of affective factor which relates to negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, and tension (Horwitz et al., 1986). Scovel (1991, p. 18) holds that “anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object”. There are different kinds of anxiety. Horwitz (2001) suggested an accurate classification of anxiety and stated that anxiety can fall into three main groups consisting of (a) trait anxiety, (b) state anxiety, and (c) situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety refers to permanent personality anxiety (Scovel, 1978). People with this type of anxiety are generally anxious. The second one, state anxiety, is regarded as temporal anxiety and emerges when responding to a certain stimulus (Spielberger, 1983). Lastly, situation-specific anxiety occurs when being in a particular situation, for instance, speaking in a foreign language class.

Thus, anxiety in a foreign language (FLA) or a SL (SLA) is a situation-specific anxiety (Aydin, 2013; Bailey et al., 1999; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre, 1999; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Besides, Horwitz et al (1986) discovered that foreign language anxiety has the same features of three performance-related anxieties; which are (a) fear of negative evaluation, (b) communication apprehension, and (c) test anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), fear is regarded as the negative evaluation as apprehension in respect to others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate themselves negatively. This anxiety becomes dominant in the class where students are progressively assessed by teachers, and they may not feel good in front of their peers (Horwitz et al., 1986). Generally, communication apprehension is regarded as a kind of shyness signified by the sense of fear as well as having anxiety while communicating with people (Horwitz et al. 1986). This anxiety relates to being judged by people and the fear of losing face. Finally, test anxiety is a kind of performance anxiety that derives from the fear of failure (Horwitz et al., 1986). Young (1991) discovered six components of anxiety in foreign language classes. They include (a) personality components, (b) learner's belief about language learning, (c) teacher's belief about language learning, (d) interaction between the teachers and the learner, (e) processes, atmosphere, and events in the class and (f) tests in a second or foreign language.

## 2.3. Speaking Anxiety

According to Zarei and Mohammadi's (2018) findings, previous study results have shown that anxiety has become the biggest challenge faced by learners in their language learning and evaluation (Abidin et al., 2012; Lucas et al., 2011; Phillips, 1992; Sadiq, 2017). Research carried out by Liu (2007) on the causes of language anxiety concluded that the key cause is fear of making mistakes. Most learners feel insecure about making mistakes and struggling to learn English and analyze situations in English (Suparna et al. 2013).

One of the main concerns of ELT researchers is the anxiety in L2 classrooms (Bensalem, 2018; Gharaghanipour et al., 2015; Sevinç & Dewaele, 2018). According to Woodrow (2006), speaking

anxiety refers to the learners' anxiety while producing the spoken language. Horwitz et al. (1986) asserted that speaking anxiety can be considered as a conceptually distinct variable in foreign language learning. Rassaei (2015) also points out that anxiety experienced in communication can be debilitating and influence students' adaptation to the target environment and the achievement of their educational goals.

Basic (2011) studied the speaking anxiety of Turkish EFL learners. The results revealed that speaking anxiety has the potential to prevent students from producing and to negatively influence their oral communication ability. Likewise, Mayangta (2013) found that the sources of students' anxiety in speaking English included learners' beliefs about language learning, personal and interpersonal anxiety, classroom procedures, instructor-learner interactions, and perceived levels of English proficiency.

Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) investigated speaking anxiety among groups of international students at a Malaysian university. They also examined teachers' reactions to learners' anxiety and students' perspectives of teachers' reaction to their anxiety. The findings indicated that Nigerians were generally not anxious when speaking. On the other hand, Iranians and Algerians suffered more from anxiety because of fearing negative evaluation and communication apprehension. In another study, Gaibani and Elmenfi (2014) compared speaking anxiety across gender. Gender differences proved effective on public speaking anxiety as men showed a better performance compared to women.

Gopang et al. (2016) investigated foreign language anxiety among Pakistani EFL learners. They reported a moderate level of anxiety in the participants. Meanwhile, Kudo et al. (2017) examined speaking anxiety in an English class in the Japanese context. The result revealed that affective aspects of L2 development such as anxiety were ignored in the Japanese curriculum.

Studies have shown that anxiety impacts the English learning of students negatively. For example, Khan (2010) revealed that, due to cognitive and memory deficits, when students feel worried, they fail to communicate their ideas. It influences their behavioral and emotional responses as well. They appear to avoid the mission, fail to focus, and experience high levels of confusion.

Toyama and Yamazaki (2021) explained that people who were anxious about learning a foreign language had higher learning difficulties and struggle with their grades, which could influence their academic achievement.

#### **2.4. Self-Assessment (SA)**

SA allows students to focus on their own work and to judge how well they have done in relation to the requirements for evaluation, in other words, it gives certain chances to be able to define what a good piece of work constitutes (Bound, 1995). As Ashrai and Mahdinezhad (2015) mentioned, SA for the teacher in the classroom is an attractive alternative to conventional ways of assessment. It is a kind of metacognitive technique that requires special consideration, it helps students develop the characteristics of the good language learner, which involves the ability to assess their own performance and the ability to be self-critical (Hedge, 2000). SA also assist learners develop learners' skills in independent learning using greater emphasis on encouraging learners to determine their own objectives and to monitor their progress (Brindly, 1989).

Self-assessment is seen as a tool and pedagogical approach to support students in examining and judging their English for Specific Purposes (ESP) oral performance, establishing gaps in it, and identifying difficulties that they face (Bourke, 2018). Those who use SA claim that complete dependence

on teacher evaluation results in students not taking any responsibility for their own learning, and it also facilitates dependence on the teacher (Ashrai & Mahdinezhad, 2015). As Michelle and Schwartz (1989) said, SA has some merits and some demerits; the benefits considered for SA are: it promotes the engagement and transparency of students; encourages students to reflect on their position and contribution to the community work process; enables students to see and reflect on the appraisal of their contribution by their peers; it focuses on improving students' decision skills.

Some of the disadvantages would be as follows: self-evaluation has a chance of being interpreted and inaccurate as a process of delivering inflated grades, and students feel ill-equipped to perform the evaluation (Michelle & Schwartz, 1989). Over time and with experience, learners' capacity to self-assess effectively improves (Cassidy, 2007). For SA, a range of instruments and techniques should also be used to take into account the different needs of learners. Self-rating, portfolios, pre-and post-course writing, learner contracts, student progress card, learner diary, a SA questionnaire, videotapes, teacher-learner interviews, articles, and rating scales are some of the SA techniques (Ariafar & Fatemipour, 2013). Such approaches include the understanding of their own development by learners, regarding language and communicative goals (Ariafar & Fatemipour, 2013).

By putting more emphasis on enabling pupils to set their own objectives and continue their development, it also aids in the progress of learners' self-governing learning abilities (Butler and Lee, 2010; Ghahderijani et al. 2021). Teachers initiate discussions about assessment with students based on the most recent advancements in learning theories; this is a significant problem for assessment in the twenty-first century since it places demands on the teachers to acquire the specialized skills required for this new, extra role. More intensive, interactive methods should be utilized to evaluate the learning process, and this work should be done in groups of peers or between a teacher and student (Adachi et al. 2018; Azizi and Namaziandost, 2023; Matsuno, 2009).

(2021) used a pre-test post-test quasi-experimental method to investigate the influence of PA on the writing performance of 200 Greek Cypriot EFL students. The study outcomes indicated that PA could have a moderately positive impact on students' writing performance. the use of PA improved students' writing performance in 5 aspects: mechanics, organization, content, focus, and vocabulary and language use.

Tunagür (2021) conducted a quantitative study in Turkey to determine whether or not employing PAs had a favorable impact on sixth-graders motivation for writing and writing anxiety. the results also revealed that the EG's motivation to write improved following treatment.

In another study, Ritonga et al. (2022) looked at how peer evaluation affected the growth of Iranian EFL learners', reading motivation (RM), vocabulary learning (VL), and reading comprehension (RC). the results demonstrated that PA positively affected the RC, RM, and VL of Iranian EFL students.

Imani (2022) compared how peer assessment and self-evaluation influenced impulsive and reflective EFL students' speaking ability. results revealed that (a) there was no significant interaction between assessment type and cognitive type, (b) peer assessment and self-assessment had the same impact on impulsive and reflective learners' speaking ability.

The effect of various styles of evaluation on EFL learners' selective and efficient reading understanding tasks was examined by Tavassoli and Nikmard (2019). The results of the study showed a substantial increase in the performance of the learners on both types of tasks.

Furthermore, Zandi (2017) examined various forms of evaluation's efficacy on selective and efficient listening tasks and correspondingly detected a substantial change using both dynamic and diagnostic evaluation on both types of listening tasks. Shahrakipour (2014) explored whether SA can affect the receptive abilities of EFL learners and attempted to see if it has the same impact on language learners in intermediate and beginner stages, the findings showed that SA substantially increased the receptive abilities of EFL learners, but the influence of SA on the ability to listen was lower than the ability to read.

### **2.5. Peer-Assessment (PA)**

PA encourages students to acquire talents and abilities that are overlooked in an educational setting where teacher assessment is the only way to measure learning (Cheng & Warren, 2005). Other studies have shown that PA has a facilitative role in the learning of students (Ballantyne, Hughes, & Mylonas, 2002). PA helps students acquire talents and strengths that are overlooked in an educational setting where teacher evaluation is the only way to measure learning (Cheng & Warren, 2005).

Considerable advantages of peer evaluation include immediate help in the classroom, gains for both the assessors and the assessees, and being individualized and engaging (Fu et al., 2019).

It can be more difficult to incorporate PA than SA. In a high school writing class in Hong Kong, for example, Sengupta (1998) assessed a peer appraisal initiative. On the other hand, many teachers have found that it is easier for most students to find mistakes in the work of other people than in their own, because of this, peer review can be a beneficial step-stone to SA. Ashrafi and Mahdinezhad (2015) mentioned some advantages and disadvantages of PA. Some of the disadvantages listed are that it promotes the engagement and transparency of students; encourages students to reflect on their position and contribution to the group work process; focuses on the growth of the decision skills of students, and provides students with more meaningful input as their peers generate it. The disadvantages identified are as follows: students appear to give the same mark to everyone; students feel ill-equipped to perform the assessment, and students may be hesitant to make peer decisions.

In particular, the three studies focusing on the use of alternative evaluation approaches in the Iranian context of the EFL (Birjandi & Hadidi Tamjid, 2010; Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2013; Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2015) did not concentrate on oral presentations of EFL Iranian learners. Three studies have discussed the efficacy of evaluation methods in the EFL Iranian context: Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2010), Khonbi and Sadeghi (2012), Sadeghi and Khonbi Tamjid (2010), Khonbi and Sadeghi (2013), and Khonbi and Sadeghi (2015). Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2012) used a quasi-experimental study of one control group and four treatment groups to investigate how positive self-/PAs can enhance writing skills. They discovered that alternative tests can be extremely conducive to the writing of students. They also revealed that the use of self, peer- and teacher reviews enhanced the writing of students overall. The attitudes of 63 Iranian EFL students towards SA, PA, and teacher evaluations were examined by Khonbi and Sadeghi (2013). They found that SA and instruction were superior to the PA community.

### **3. Research Questions**

The main purpose of the current study was to compare the impact of self-assessment and peer-assessment on EFL learners' speaking ability and speaking anxiety. More specifically, the following research questions were raised:

1. Is there a significant difference between the impact of PA and SA on ESP students' speaking ability?
2. Is there a significant difference between the impact of PA and SA on ESP students' speaking anxiety?

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Research Design

The quasi-experimental design was used in the study. In fact, a quasi-experiment is an empirical inquiry utilized to assess the causal influence of two interventions on its target population. The quasi-experimental research resembles traditional experimental design; however, they explicitly do not contain the component of random assignment to treatment or control. In its place, these designs characteristically let the investigator control the assignment to the treatment condition, nevertheless using some standard other than random assignment. This study is concerned with two variables: type of assessment (SA versus PA) as the independent variable (Group), and speaking ability and speaking anxiety as the two dependent variables. There were two experimental groups: Group A and B. They received different instructional treatments (Hatch & Farhady 1982, p. 20). Experimental Group A experienced SA while Experimental Group B received PA. After experiencing the treatments, both groups gave a post-test of speaking ability and speaking anxiety.

### 4.2. Participants

Sixty ESP students majoring in psychology comprised the participants of this study. They were studying at Islamic Azad University in Zanjan, Iran. They were selected from among 90 learners based on their OPT (Oxford Placement Test) scores. In fact, those who scored between 31 and 46 on OPT were selected to take part in the current study. They were all female learners of English and native speakers of Farsi. They ranged in age mostly from 18 to 28, and have never lived or stayed in a foreign country longer than two weeks. They were chosen from the researchers' available classes using convenient sampling, and were equally assigned into SA ( $n = 30$ ), and PA ( $n = 30$ ) groups.

### 4.3. Instruments

Three instruments were used: 1) Oxford Placement Test (OPT), 2) PET (Preliminary English Test) Pre- and Post-Test of Speaking, 3) Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire, and 4) PET Speaking Scale. These instruments are explained below.

#### 4.3.1. OPT

OPT consists of 60 multiple-choice items which determine general language ability and can categorize learners in the appropriate levels. This test differs from most other placement tests. Not only does it check grammar and vocabulary, it also examines how learners use that knowledge to comprehend meaning in communication. It also helps students to practice using English in a natural and confidential way and get prepared for authentic situations. The reliability index for OPT was reported to be 0.90 using Cronbach's Alpha (Pahlavani & Maftoon, 2015).

### **4.3.2. Pre- and Post-Test of Speaking**

To measure the participants' overall speaking skills, two versions of the PET were used as a pre-post speaking test. Prior to the program deployment, the PET speaking exam was utilized as a pre-test, and a comparable PET speaking exam was utilized as a post-test to determine the success of SA versus PA.

Two examiners performed the speaking test. This test takes around 10 to 12 minutes and comprises 4 parts. Part 1 consists of general conversation between the examiner and each of the candidates (about personal information, how to spell the examinees' names, candidates' interests, a description of a typical day, etc.). The second section includes a simulated situation between the two examinees. The examinees have to be able to make suggestions and respond to these suggestions properly, and they discuss alternatives.

Part three entails a picture description. In fact, each candidate is given a color photograph to describe. The photograph shows a common situation. The examinees are required to describe the persons, the context, and the actions shown in the photograph using simple language. Finally, part four consists of a common conversation between the two candidates. The information in the third part is employed as the beginning for a conversation about the likes and dislikes of the candidates, their personal lives, past experiences, interests, etc. The candidates are asked to talk and explain the reasons for their opinions and preferences. To estimate the reliability of the PET speaking test, inter-rater reliability between the two rater's scores was used via performing Pearson Correlation and reached 0.84. Moreover, three TEFL experts (University Professors) accepted the content and face validity of the test.

### **4.3.3. PET Speaking Scale**

The interlocutors (i.e., the current researcher) assign a global mark out of 25 based on five criteria in PET Speaking Scale which are interpreted at PET level: Interactive Communication, Vocabulary, Grammar, Fluency and Pronunciation. The assessment is based on performance in the entire test, and are based on performance in particular parts of the test.

### **4.3.4. Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire**

The next instrument was Speaking Anxiety Scale made by Chowdhury (2014). This instrument includes 25 items in which each item has a 5-point scale with "1" = "Entirely disagree", "2" = "Disagree", "3" = "Not sure", "4" = "Agree" and "5" = "Entirely agree". The students had to select the suitable choice. Cronbach's Alpha index of this scale in the context of this study was assessed to be 0.81. Meanwhile, the face and content validity of the Speaking Anxiety Scale was confirmed by three experts in EFL.

## **4.4. Procedure**

Firstly, 90 learners in four intact classes took OPT to specify their proficiency level. Participants' performance was calculated out of 60 and those who were classified at intermediate level were selected as the intended participants of this study. Afterwards, the four classes were assigned to two SA groups (n = 30) and two PA groups (n = 30). Then, they were given the pre-test of both speaking ability and speaking anxiety.

The PET Speaking test was conducted by two examiners (an Interlocutor and an Assessor) with pairs of candidates in four parts. The assessor did not play any role in the interaction process. The

learners interacted with the interlocutor (the researcher), employing the language generally used with meeting people for the first time. It was a ten-minute face-to-face interaction with each student. Students were asked to execute certain duties and exhibit their ability to utilize language in a specified topic or activity during the discussion.

The participants' language abilities were examined during the speaking exam. The language of the Speaking examination was deliberately chosen to be accessible to candidates at this level; if candidates did not understand a question or an instruction, they might ask for it to be repeated or clarified, and they were usually given credit for doing so. Equally, they got credit for using paraphrase to supplement any inadequate linguistic resources.

After the speaking skill was examined first, the investigator embarked on treatment. The treatment lasted eight weeks and it contained three stages of 1) SA and PA instruction, 2) picture story narration, and 3) SA and PA practices. "It is essential to establish clear criteria for students to use when they assess their own performance" (Harris, 1997, p. 5). Because the participants did not know assessing speaking performance and how to assess themselves and their peers, nor do they know the experts' standards to assess speaking, they got instruction before participating in the self- and PA procedures. The goal was to help learners better comprehend the assessment scale. Learners evaluated recorded spoken performances against the criteria during the training session. The teacher then made a comment on the recorded sound to show how she evaluated and scored the performances, as well as how well the participants' assessments were made.

The treatment was picture story tasks. The pictures were selected from Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET) showing an everyday situation. Learners were given a picture and were asked to discover the story and then orally present it. They described the persons, the setting, and the actions shown in the photograph. However, in the SA group, the learners assessed their own performance after each speaking. They were instructed to record their own speaking, transcribe it and comment on it based on PET analytic rating scale. However, in the PA group, every session, some students were supposed to deliver an oral presentation about the picture, while the peers graded them according to PET analytic rating scale. When the treatment period terminated, both groups took a similar version of speaking test as a post-test as well as the same speaking anxiety questionnaire for post-test. After administering the posttest, we checked the two types of assessment's comparative effect on the ESP students' speaking ability and speaking anxiety.

#### 4.5. Statistical Analysis

Independent samples t-test was performed to check the homogeneity of the SA and PA groups' OPT scores since there were just two independent groups with merely on single shot test. In addition, one-way analysis of covariance (1-way ANCOVA) was adopted answer the two research questions of the study as there were two independent groups with two sets of speaking ability and anxiety scores as the depended variables i.e., pretest and posttest scores. The scores on the pretest were considered as the covariates.

### 5. Results

In order to select homogeneity intermediate participants, the researcher gave OPT to 90 ESP students. The results gained on OPT are set forth in Table 1. According to Table 1, the mean, median and mode of the OPT scores before homogenizing were 38.20, 38, and 35 respectively. These central

parameters are close to one another denoting that the OPT scores are normally distributed around the mean. Moreover, according to Table 1, the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors are not beyond the ranges of + or - 1.96 showing that the OPT scores are normal.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for OPT before Homogenizing*

Ns	Means	Median	Modes	SD	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
90	38.20	38.00	35	7.56	-0.267	-1.837

As explained in chapter three of this study, these 60 students were divided into the SA ( $n = 30$ ) and PA group ( $n = 30$ ) based on their OPT scores equally. Therefore, independent samples t-test was used to confirm the homogeneity of the SA group and PA group's OPT proficiency scores. We used parametric analysis (independent samples t-test) since four assumptions of interval data, independence of subjects, normality and homogeneity of variances were met (Field, 2009). Table 2 indicates that the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors for the two groups' OPT scores are within the ranges of + or - 1.96 denoting that the OPT scores of the two groups did not violated the normality assumption. Moreover, Table 2 shows that the mean score of the SA ( $M = 38.73$ ,  $SD = 4.63$ ) and PA groups ( $M = 38.43$ ,  $SD = 4.60$ ) are close to each other.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Two Groups' OPT Scores*

Group	N	Mean	SD	SEM	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis Ratio
SA	30	38.73	4.631	0.845	-0.012	-1.513
PA	30	38.43	4.599	0.840	-0.011	-0.377

Based on the results represented in Table 3, equal of variances was met since significance associated with Levene's Test (0.86) exceeded 0.05. Additionally, according to the results manifested in Table 3, t-test yielded no statistically significant difference in the proficiency measures for the SA and PA groups,  $t(58) = 0.25$ ,  $p = 0.80$ ,  $p > 0.05$ , showing that students in the SA and PA groups were homogeneous considering English language proficiency.

**Table 3**

*Independent Samples T-test for the OPT Scores*

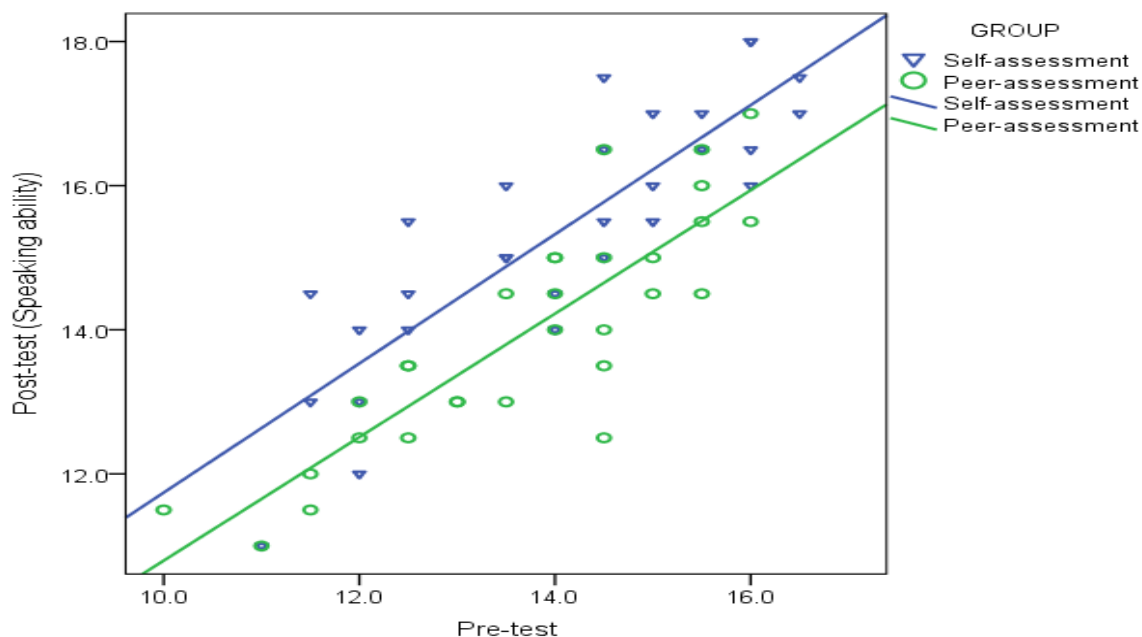
Factor	Levene's Test for Variances		T-test for Means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	0.029	0.865	0.252	58	0.802	0.300
Equal variances not assumed			0.252	57.997	0.802	0.300

ANCOVA was to explore whether there is a significant difference between the impacts of SA and PA on ESP students' speaking anxiety. Pre-test scores are dealt as a covariate to PA for groups' pre-existing differences. As the covariates were measured before treatment, they could not be affected by the treatment. Therefore, this assumption was not violated. Also, in each ANCOVA analysis, only one covariate existed so the correlation among covariates was not valid.

Covariate was measured reliably ( $r = 0.84$ , inter-rater). The assumptions of linearity and the homogeneity of regression slopes were also checked. Figure 1 examines the linearity assumption, which assumes that the relationship between post-test speaking ability and the covariate of pre-test of speaking is a linear one. As seen in the scatterplot, the two lines are straight, so it can be concluded that the requirement of linearity is fulfilled.

**Figure 1**

*Scatter Plot of Speaking on Pre-test and Post-test*



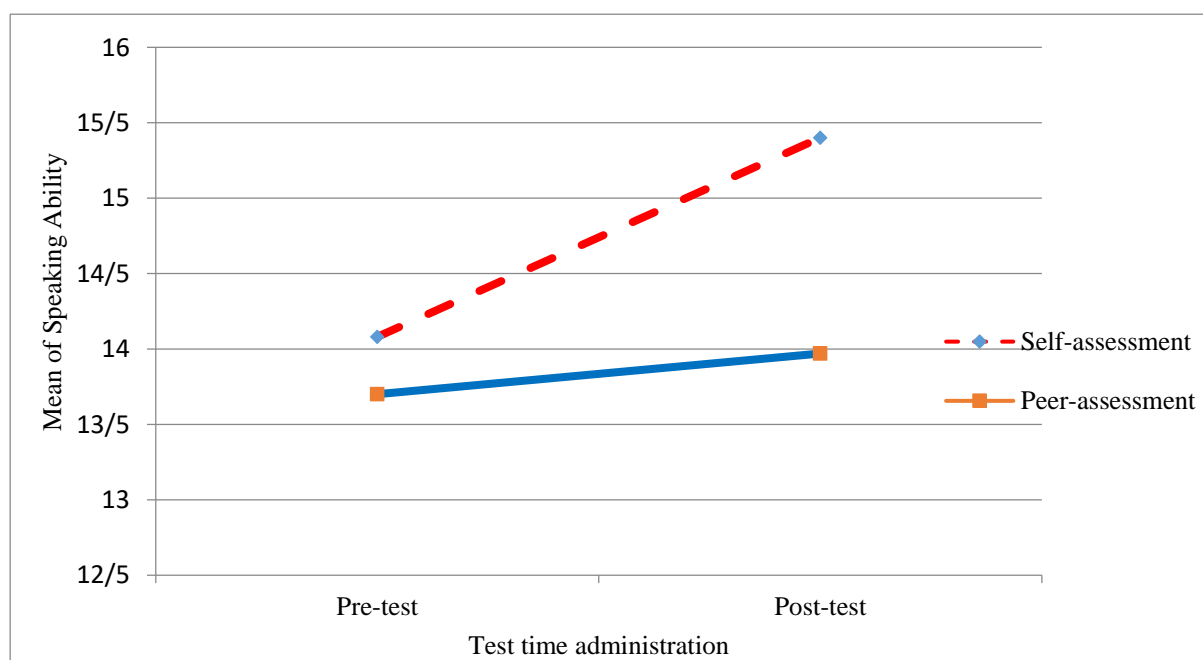
The results showed that the significant value associated with Levene's test (0.62) exceeded 0.05 and so the homogeneity of variance was not violated for speaking in the two groups. In addition, the two groups' skewness and kurtosis and their ratios over the standard errors for speaking ability scores on both pre- and post-test. Since all ratios were within the ranges of + or - 1.96, it was concluded that the assumption of normality was met.

Besides, ANCOVA indicated that the significance level of the interaction (Group \* Pre-test) between group and the pre-test of total speaking ability exceeded 0.05,  $F(1, 56) = 0.080$ ,  $p = 0.78$ , and, therefore, not statistically significant. This means that the pre- and post-test of speaking ability scores in the two groups enjoy the regression slopes homogeneity. Since all assumptions were met, the researcher of this study was justified to use one-way ANCOVA. Descriptive statistics including the number of students, mean, standard deviation, and standard error of means for the speaking ability scores in the SA and PA groups were summarized in Table 4. Table 4 shows that the mean of speaking ability in the SA group ( $M = 14.08$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ), and PA group ( $M = 13.70$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) are not far from each other on the pre-test; nonetheless, the mean of speaking ability in the SA group ( $M = 15.40$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ) is much greater than the mean of the PA group ( $M = 13.97$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ) on post-test. Two raters marked the essays and the average of the two raters' score was computed and used in the main analysis.

**Table 4***Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Ability Scores on Pre- and Post-test (Average of the Two Raters)*

Tests	Group	N	Mean	SD	SEM
Pre-test	SA	30	14.08	1.66	0.303
	PA	30	13.70	1.55	0.288
Post-test	SA	30	15.40	1.73	0.316
	PA	30	13.97	1.58	0.287

As it is observable from Figure 2, two groups' speaking mean has decreased from pre- to post-intervention though the decrease of speaking ability mean for the SA group looks much steeper than the PA one.

**Figure 2***Line Chart for Two Groups' Means of Speaking Ability (Pre-Test & Post-Test)*

After adjusting for the speaking pre-test scores, a significant difference was found among the speaking means of the two groups on the post-test,  $F(1, 57) = 24.24, p = 0.000$  (Table 5). Therefore, it can be claimed that SA is more effective than PA to improve speaking ability of ESP students. Also, Table 5 indicates that there was a strong relationship between the pre-speaking and post-speaking scores on speaking ability,  $F(1, 57) = 159.90, p = 0.000$ . This means the speaking ability scores gained on pre-test affect the post-test speaking scores. Additionally, Table 5 reflects that effect size is 0.74.

Analysis of covariance was performed to find out if there is a significant difference between the impact of PA and SA on ESP students' speaking anxiety. The scores on the pre-test are dealt as a covariate to PA for pre-existing differences between the groups. ANCOVA assumes the following assumptions are met: no influence of treatment on covariate measurement, reliability of covariates, no strong correlations among covariates, linear relationship between dependent variable and covariate, equality of error variances, normality, and homogeneity of regression slopes. As the covariates were

measured prior to the treatment, they could not be influenced by the treatment. Thus, this assumption was not violated. Furthermore, there was only one covariate in each ANCOVA analysis. Therefore, the assumption of correlation among covariates was not applicable.

**Table 5**

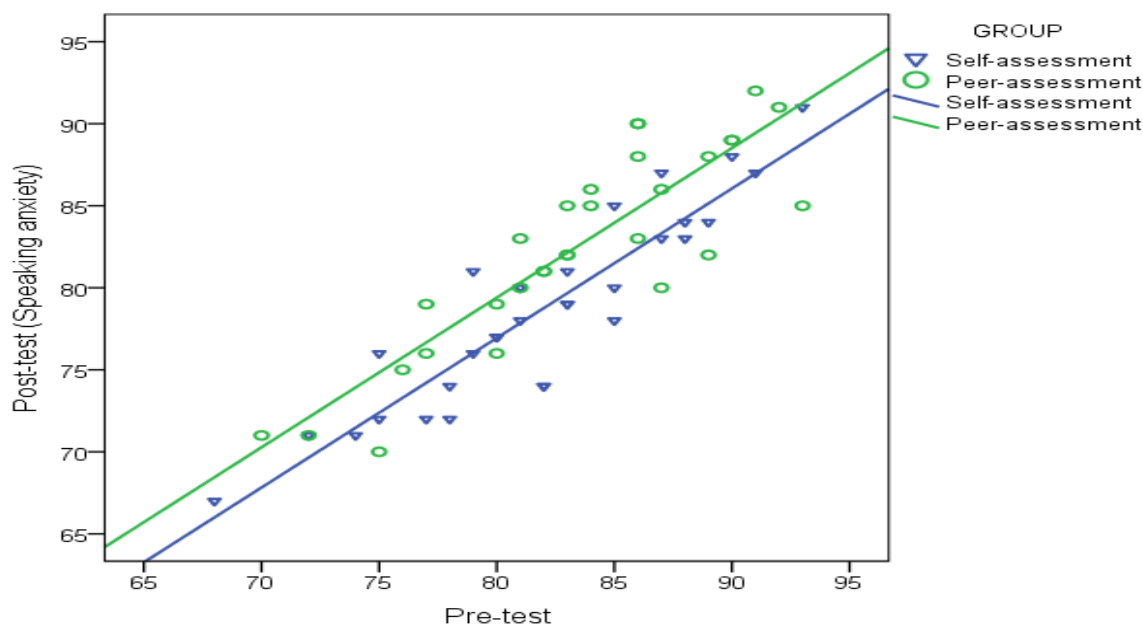
*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects on Speaking Ability*

Source	Types III Sum of Squares	df	Means Square	F	Sigs.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Models	148.156	2	74.078	100.950	0.000	0.780
Intercepts	4.837	1	4.837	6.592	0.013	0.104
Pre-test	117.339	1	117.339	159.904	0.000	0.737
Groups	17.791	1	17.791	24.244	0.000	0.298
Errors	41.827	57	0.734			
Totals	13126.000	60				
Corrected Totals	189.983	59				

To check the assumption of the reliability of covariates, Cronbach's Alpha was computed. The results indicated that the covariate was measured reliably ( $r = 0.81$ ). To run the analysis, the assumptions of linearity of the relationship between dependent variable and the covariate, and the homogeneity of regression slopes were also examined. Figure 3, tests the linearity assumption, which assumes that the relationship between the dependent variable (post-test of speaking anxiety) and the covariate (pre-test of speaking anxiety) is a linear one. The scatterplot indicates that the two lines are straight showing that the requirement of linearity is met.

**Figure 3**

*Pre- and Post-Test of Speaking Anxiety*



The results indicated that significant value related to Levene's test (0.42) was larger than 0.05 denoting that assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for speaking anxiety. Additionally, the two groups' skewness and kurtosis and their ratios over the standard errors for speaking anxiety scores

are provided in Table 6. As all ratios were not beyond the ranges of  $\pm 1.96$  showing that the normality was not violated. Moreover, the results yielded that the significance level of the interaction (Group \* Pre-test) between group and the pre-test of total speaking anxiety was more than 0.05,  $F(1, 56) = 0.024$ ,  $p = 0.93$ ,  $p > 0.05$ , and, so, not statistically significant. In other words, the pre-test and post-test of speaking anxiety scores in the two groups meet the homogeneity of regression slopes assumption.

One-way ANCOVA was run as all assumptions were met. Descriptive statistics including the number of students, mean, standard deviation, and standard error of means for the speaking anxiety scores in the SA and PA groups are manifested in Table 6. According to the results of descriptive statistics shown in Table 4.12, the mean of speaking anxiety in the SA group ( $M = 81.93$ ,  $SD = 5.90$ ) and PA group ( $M = 83.40$ ,  $SD = 5.82$ ) are not far from each other on the pre-test; nonetheless, the mean of speaking anxiety in the SA group ( $M = 78.70$ ,  $SD = 5.87$ ) is much lower than the mean of the PA group ( $M = 82.50$ ,  $SD = 6.06$ ) on the post-test.

**Table 6**

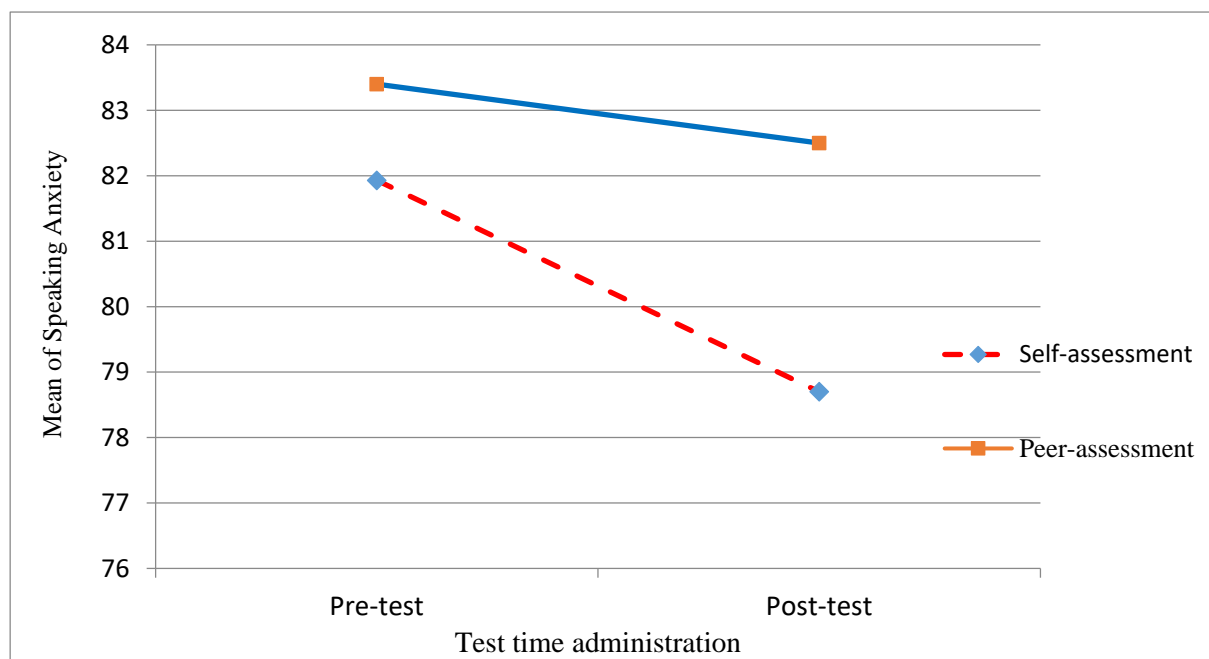
*Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Anxiety by Group*

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	SEM
Pre-test	SA	30	81.93	5.901	1.077
	PA	30	83.40	5.823	1.063
Post-test	SA	30	78.70	5.873	1.072
	PA	30	82.50	6.065	1.108

A Line Chart (Figure 4) was drawn to illustrate the results of both pre-test and post-test for the two groups in terms of speaking anxiety. The Line Chart indicates that the speaking anxiety mean of the two groups has decreased from pre- to post-intervention though the fall trend of speaking anxiety mean for the SA group looks much steeper than the PA one.

**Figure 4**

*Line Chart for Two Groups' Means of Speaking Anxiety (Pre-Test & Post-Test)*



The results of the ANCOVA are represented in Table 7. After adjusting for the speaking anxiety scores on the pre-test, a significant difference was detected among the speaking anxiety means of the two groups on the post-test,  $F(1, 57) = 12.43, p = 0.003$ ; Thus, it can be asserted that SA is more effective than PA to develop speaking anxiety of ESP students. Besides, as seen in Table 7, a strong relationship,  $F(1, 57) = 230.06, p = 0.000, p < 0.05$ , between the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores on the speaking anxiety was found. This means the speaking anxiety scores obtained on the pre-test influence the speaking anxiety scores gained on the post-test. Moreover, Table 7 indicates that effect size for pre-test effect is 0.80.

**Table 7**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects on Speaking Anxiety*

Source	Types III Sum of Squares	df	Means Square	F	Sig.	Partials Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1873.816	2	936.908	130.068	0.000	0.820
Intercept	7.907	1	7.907	1.098	0.299	0.019
Pre-test	1657.216	1	1657.216	230.065	0.000	0.801
Group	89.517	1	89.517	12.427	0.003	0.179
Error	410.584	57	7.203			
Total	392066.000	60				
Corrected Totals	2284.400	59				

## 6. Discussion

Two research questions were raised in this study: 1) Is there a significant difference between the impacts of SA and PA on ESP students' speaking ability? 2) Is there a significant difference between the impacts of SA and PA on ESP students' speaking anxiety?

Having done this study, regarding the first research question, it was found that SA is more effective than PA to enhance speaking ability of ESP students. This result is compatible with Birjandi and Tamjid's (2012) finding. In fact, they investigated the effect of SA on language performance concerning SA and PA activities in English as a foreign language class. They could conclude that self-evaluation could enhance the efficient language skills of learners by evaluating their tasks objectively over time, assessing their failures, and measuring the progress of their language learning.

Additionally, this outcome correlates with Ashrai and Mahdinezhad' (2015) belief that SA is a kind of metacognitive technique that requires special consideration. It aids learners develop the characteristics of the "good language learner, which involves the ability to assess their own performance and the ability to be self-critical" (Hedge, 2000, p. 94). It also helps learners develop students' independent learning skills through "greater emphasis on encouraging learners to determine their own objectives and to monitor their progress" (Brindly, 1989, p. 59).

Ritonga et al. (2022) confirmed the effects of peer assessment on enhancing Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension, reading motivation, and vocabulary development, which supports the results of the study. Our results are also aligned with those of Imani (2022), who showed the beneficial impacts of peer and self-evaluation on the speaking ability of EFL learners. Similarly, our findings in this survey are reinforced by Li et al. (2021) who figured out the efficiency of peer assessment on EFL learners' non-cognitive skills. The findings of this study are congruent with the one conducted by Fathi

and Khodabakhsh (2020), who found both self-assessment and peer assessment activities helped reduce the writing anxiety of the participants.

Concerning the second research question, it was discovered that SA was more beneficial than PA to affect speaking anxiety. Baleghizadeh and Masoun's (2014) finding supports the current finding in that they concluded that self-evaluation enhances the degree of self-efficacy of EFL students. In addition, they can consider their strengths, weaknesses, and different aspect of English learning and success responsibly (Baleghizadeh & Masoun, 2014).

## 7. Conclusions and Implications

With the aid of this study, students can become more self- and peer-directed, and teachers can act as collaborators and facilitators. The incorporation of peer and self-assessments in language instruction can help EFL teachers assign a more responsible and autonomous role to their students by delivering more motivating and self-regulated learning in induced and sustained learning.

This study explored the impacts of PA and SA on ESP students' speaking ability and anxiety. After doing this study, the current researchers could come to two main conclusions. The first conclusion was that of ESP students' speaking ability can be improved by SA. In fact, it was concluded that this SA effect was more noticeable than PA effect to improve oral performance. This is due to the fact that, according to Little (2005), learners can better establish realistic purposes and control the process of their own learning. A second argument is that in a learner-centered approach, learners are needed to be engaged in all the processes of learning, including the process of evaluation. Besides, Harris (1997) has suggested that the training assists and is actually essential, since SA depends on a composite set of skills.

Additionally, according to Ross et al. (1998), SA, which can be seen as a measurement conducted by students themselves, can be effective to assist students to evaluate their progress in learning or to determine their communication skills. That means they learn attributes required for good success, how to measure their own act or accomplishment, how to set personal goals, and then develop self-reflection habits by including learners in the appraisal process.

The second main conclusion of this study was that speaking anxiety can be diminished when the ESP learners assess their own oral production. In fact, as Fatemipour (2013) believes, self-reflection activity (like SA oral production in the current study) as a successful activity controls speaking anxiety.

In other words, self-reflection practice can help language learners to resolve their problems, identifying their strong and weak capabilities, and building their confidence.

Overall, the present research could conclude that different types of assessment can be used in various contexts and situations, with different kinds of students with different backgrounds, cultures, capabilities, personal characteristics, etc. However, traditional teacher-centered assessments need to be replaced by the innovative students-centered alternative in the recent era. It's the time to confide and trust the learners as the main factor in the learning process so that they can feel that they are responsible for their own learning, progress, and efforts. They should pursue ones' learning process, know their own positive and negative points, preferences, needs, learning strategies, suitable materials, evaluations etc.

Although the authors tried to write a perfect research, we could not escape from some limitations. We could include only 60 participants in our research. Only quantitative data were utilized

to answer the research questions. The authors could train the participants in only 13 conversations in 13 sessions. Because of gender segregation, the authors could work on female students.

Finally, due to limitations in treatment phase as well as the number of participants, several recommendations for additional research are made. Regarding the treatment phase, it is advised to repeat this investigation over a longer length of time. the same study can be done on a sample of EFL students to provide the researcher(s) with more precise and broadly applicable results.

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### **Authors' Contributions**

All authors have conducted the study, collected data, analyzed and interpreted the data, and written up the manuscript.

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### **Competing Interests**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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