

A Comparative Study of Chinese learners' English Speaking Ability: Self-Assessment Based on the CSE Speaking Scale

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Abstract

This study investigates Chinese junior high school students' assessment of their own English speaking abilities based on the CSE Speaking Scale and discovers whether their self-assessment varies between different genders, grades and school regions. Three hundred and ten students from a rural and an urban junior high school first completed a questionnaire comprising of 35 statements on both oral expression and oral strategy defined in the CSE Speaking Scale. Then 36 of them participated in two semi-structured focus group interviews. The findings showed that junior high school students believed, overall, their English speaking ability was satisfactory in both oral expression and strategy. Secondly, there were significant differences in some aspects of oral expression and strategy among different grades and school regions. Thirdly, students agreed that CSE as a self-evaluation tool could help improve their oral proficiency and they would make remedial measures to tackle weak areas of oral English. Suggestions were made based on the findings.

Keywords

China's Standards of English Language Ability (The CSE), English speaking, self-assessment.

1. Introduction

Among the four fundamental English skills, speaking is traditionally ignored given the exam-oriented English teaching atmosphere and lack of real-life English language use environment in China. Especially in rural areas more traditional teaching resources and methods are heavily relied on. Class time is often dominated by teachers' teaching and written drilling exercises. Teachers and students do not attach importance to speaking, and as a consequence, students are psychologically afraid of speaking.

The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 edition) clearly states that attention should be paid to the "integration of learning, teaching and evaluation". There are various forms of evaluation, including teacher evaluation, peer evaluation and student self-evaluation. Self-evaluation has been found conducive to English speaking development in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) field. It can benefit students as it makes them feel more engaged in the appraisal process, gain greater insights into their learning and ability, and set future goals for improvement.

Nevertheless, previously there was no reliable or unified standard for student self-evaluation in China. In April 2018, China's Standards of English Language Ability (hereafter The CSE) (National Education Examinations Authority, 2018), the first English proficiency standard for Chinese learners, was officially released by National Language Commission of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic. It is believed to guide or even regulate the English language teaching and assessment practice in China. The "can-do" statements in the CSE provide common

reference points for evaluating students' language abilities, thus making students' self-evaluation plausible and easier.

This study employs the CSE Speaking Scale to promote students' self-assessment of their speaking ability and develop their self-regulated learning skills. The results of this study will provide empirical evidence to the validity of the CSE Speaking Scale in guiding self-evaluation. By comparing the self-assessment results between learners of different genders, grades and regions, it will increase their awareness of the importance of English speaking and self-evaluation, thereby achieving better self-regulated learning. In addition, the research ideas and methods of this topic can be applied to the research of English oral teaching or other teaching in primary and secondary schools.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The CSE and The CSE Speaking Scale

In June 2018, the CSE was officially implemented at all educational levels in China. This scale divides the English language ability into nine levels and three stages from low to high, including elementary stage (Levels 1-3), intermediate stage (Levels 4-6) and advanced stage (Levels 7-9). The descriptive framework of the CSE defines different aspects of learners' language abilities, including language comprehension, language expression, pragmatic ability, linguistic knowledge, translation and interpreting, and language use strategies. There are totally 8 subscales to illustrate the language ability components which are currently in practice in the Chinese context of teaching, learning and assessment, namely listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, interpretation, grammar and pragmatics.

The CSE Speaking Scale is designed on the basis of Bachman's theory of communicative language ability (Bachman, 1990). It is a series of standards for evaluating and grading Chinese learners' English speaking ability. It consists of an overall scale, a subscale of oral expression comprising six aspects, and a subscale of oral expression strategies comprising three aspects. Similar to the CSE, its Speaking Scale adopts nine levels to describe speaking abilities which correspond to primary school (Levels 1-2), junior high school (Level 3), senior high school (Level 4), university (Levels 5-6), English major (Level 7), and high-end foreign language talents (Levels 8-9) respectively.

It is advocated that the CSE Speaking Scale has multiple advantages in English speaking learning, teaching and testing. In terms of learning, through CSE Speaking Scale, learners can have a clear understanding of their learning objectives, processes and strategies and can make adjustments easily. In English speaking teaching, teachers can better design and implement the objectives and tasks of teaching. In the aspect of English speaking testing, the CSE Speaking Scale can provide certain theoretical bases for the preparation of questions, outline and assessment criteria of tests (Qiu, 2021).

As a standard of English proficiency for Chinese learners, various efforts have been exerted to align the CSE with the widely applied proficiency scales such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching and assessment (CEFR) (e.g., Peng, 2021, 2022; Peng & Liu, 2021; Peng, Liu, & Cai, 2022; Zhao & Coniam, 2022). It has also been applied to international tests such as IELTS and Aptis (e.g., Chen & Hu, 2021), IELTS speaking (Chen & Wu, 2022), and TOEFL iBT (e.g., Papageorgiou, Wu, Hsieh, Tannenbaum, & Cheng, 2019). It can be expected that the CSE can connect with more international examinations and scales to promote more academic exchanges and strengthen educational ties between China and other countries.

The research scope of CSE in China is relatively broad. For example, Liu (2021) focused on discussing the application and implications of CSE in language learning, teaching, and evaluation, as well as its validity verification and theoretical basis. Some scholars have

conducted research on the application of the CSE reading, listening, and writing scales. For example, Li (2022) applied the CSE writing scale in self-evaluation of high school students' writing. Gu, Lin and Liu (2019) explored the factors that influence the effectiveness of reading scales on high school students' self-evaluation. Among them, the research related to speaking includes empirical research on the CSE Speaking Scale (Qiu, 2021), research on the application of Speaking Scale in teaching speaking (Luo & Wang, 2022), an introduction to the principles, framework, and methods of developing oral scales (Jin & Jie, 2017), and a study on the impacts of Speaking Scale (Jin & Jie, 2020). However, none of them links speaking with self-evaluation.

2.2. Self-assessment

The terms self-evaluation and self-assessment are interchangeable (Popova, 2016). Scholars have different definitions of the concept of self-evaluation. Andrade (2019) summarized that self-evaluation is a typical form of adaptive functional analysis that includes personal abilities, processes, and outcomes. In Boud's (2013) view, by asking oneself a series of questions and questioning one's learning process, one can make the next judgment and make a decision, which is the process of completing self-evaluation. Overall, self-evaluation is the process of making evaluation of one's own learning achievements and abilities, as well as making plans and adjustments for the next step of learning.

Self-assessment can be conducted in a variety of ways, for example, self-test method, questionnaire survey method, personal diary, learning contract evaluation, portfolio evaluation. Bachman and Palmer (1996) emphasised that self-assessment should be conducted in an interactive and user-friendly way that learners are able to accurately self-assess their abilities. Self-evaluation and self-regulation are closely related and self-evaluation is incorporated in the process of self-regulated learning. Huang (2016) maintained that self-evaluation is an important component of self-regulation, which can improve students' learning performance and achieve certain teaching benefits. Self-evaluation plays a significant role as a learning tool. On the one hand, self-evaluation can help students set goals, conduct self-monitoring and reflection. On the other, it can improve students' self-efficacy (Butler, 2023). Jamrus and Razali (2019) stressed that students can become excellent feedback givers through self-assessment, which is favourable for the improvement of critical thinking, construction of English knowledge and cultivation of autonomy. Moreover, Chalkia (2012) asserted that self-assessment is essential in boosting confidence and increasing communication between students and teachers. The advantages of self-assessment can be outlined as: reducing the pressure brought by traditional tests, improving students' confidence and self-esteem, facilitating students to check and fill in gaps, identifying the strong and weak points, and enhancing students' dialectical and rational thinking (Alek, Marzuki, Farkhan, & Deni, 2020). These advantages have been evidenced by empirical studies on the development of English speaking skills. For instance, in Chen's (2008) longitudinal case study, students were closely monitored and took charge of their own learning of oral skills. After receiving continuous feedback from the teacher and through regular practice, students were able to self-assess their oral performances more accurately.

2.3. Use of Can-Do Statements in Speaking Ability Assessment

It is worth noting that there are many studies on oral self-assessment and the use of instruments such as can-do statements in self-assessment has been validated in a number of other studies. However, there are scarce studies using CSE for oral self-assessment. For example, the ACTFL-based can-do statements were respectively adopted as self-assessment instruments to compare students' self-ratings against an Intensive English Placement Test result (Brown, Dewey, & Cox, 2014) and to evaluate learners' linguistic gains over a period (Summers, Cox, McMurry, & Dewey, 2019). Asdar (2017) studied the effectiveness of self-assessment using CEFR A1, A2, B1 and B2 levels on students' spoken interaction and concluded

that most students were positive about the impact of self-assessment although it was somewhat challenging when misunderstanding of the self-assessment form occurred. Similarly, Jankowska and Zielińska (2014) required students to use CEFR C1-level (university students) oral descriptors as checklists for brief self-evaluation. Their findings showed 50% of the students were able to assess their own performance on recorded speeches and recognize their oral strengths and weaknesses in different oral aspects. They also suggested that the majority of students interviewed regarded the checklist useful and would consider using self-assessment in the classroom once they became qualified teachers.

More recently, the self-assessment method was employed by Zhao and Coniam (2022) to explore the comparability of the CSE and the CEFR. After taking two comparable tests of reading and language use in the LanguageCert Test of English, students completed a yes-no questionnaire to indicate their agreement to the can-do statements derived from the CSE and the CEFR descriptors respectively. One of their findings is that respondents tended to slightly over-estimate their abilities on both the CEFR and the CSE. The authors also commended that the self-assessment approach might be useful for other assessment situations, where can-do ratings may be incorporated at the end of an assessment session.

2.4. Summary

There are numerous studies on CSE and self-evaluation respectively, but limited research has applied the CSE Speaking Scale to self-evaluation at the junior high school level. On the one hand, most research on CSE either involves mapping the CSE with other international reference frameworks, or explores the validity of the CSE in listening, reading, and writing. On the other hand, the scanty research on the CSE Speaking Scale is not related to self-evaluation. Therefore, this study aims to investigate junior high school students' assessment of their own speaking abilities based on the CSE Speaking Scale and discover whether their self-assessment varies between different genders, grades and school regions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

Based on the aforementioned research gaps and the research objectives, this study will mainly address the following research questions:

- (1) What is junior high school students' overall assessment of their own English speaking ability against the framework of the CSE Speaking Scale?
- (2) To what extent do their self-assessments differ in terms of gender, grade, and region?
- (3) What implications do the students think the CSE Speaking Scale can provide for the improvement of their English speaking ability?

3.2. Research Subjects

A total of 310 students participated in this study, including 166 boys and 144 girls. Specifically, 105, 106 and 99 participants were from Grade 7, 8, and 9 respectively, and 158 and 152 came from a rural and an urban school respectively. Eighty-four percent of the students aged between 13 to 15 years old.

3.3. Research Tools

3.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire mainly consisted of two parts: students' personal information and statements. Personal information included name, gender, age, class, and school. According to the CSE developers, CSE Level 3 is targeted at junior high school students, thus descriptors in Level 3 of the CSE Speaking Scale were designed to constitute the 35 statements of the

questionnaire. Twenty statements focused on oral expression and 15 on oral strategy. The oral expression statements were further divided into 3 on overall expression and 17 on the 6 aspects: description, narration, exposition, instruction, argumentation and interaction. The oral strategy statements were made up of 3 on overall strategy and 12 on dimensional strategies: planning, execution, and assessment. All the statements were modified by adding "in English I" before the "can-do" statements in the original scale. The five-point Likert rating scale was adopted, namely "strongly agree", "agree", "uncertain", "disagree", and "strongly disagree", and were recorded as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The questionnaire was written in Chinese to ensure students' full comprehension of the statements.

3.3.2. Semi-structured Interview

The interview was conducted in the semi-structured format over two 15-minute focus groups after students completed the questionnaire. Six students from each grade of rural and urban junior high schools participated in the interview, with a total of 36 students, including 20 boys and 16 girls. This interview adopted a one-on-one questioning method, while the remaining students kept quiet. From the beginning of the first question to the end, the conversation was conducted in Chinese and audio-recorded throughout the process. The three questions for this interview were as follows:

- (1) What do you think of your overall level of oral English proficiency?
- (2) What can you do to improve your oral English ability after completing the self-assessment questionnaire?
- (3) Does self-assessment using the CSE scale help your oral ability development?

3.4. Data Analysis

The SPSS 24.0 software was adopted to generate the descriptive statistics containing mean and standard deviation, as well as the independent sample t-test and ANOVA results containing significance values and mean differences. For the interview, the recording was transcribed and analyzed to support findings from the questionnaire data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Overall Performance of Junior High School Students

It could be seen from Table 1 that the average self-evaluation scores of the respondents ranged between 1.99 and 2.32, all of which were less than 3, indicating that the respondents agreed that their oral proficiency was satisfactory in the six expression aspects and three strategy aspects tested.

Among them, in terms of expression, the respondents rated 2.04 and 2.25 for narration and interaction respectively, indicating that they tended to be most positive about their narration ability and least positive about their interaction ability. In terms of strategy, respondents rated 1.99 and 2.32 for planning and execution respectively, suggesting that they thought their planning and execution strategy were the most developed and least developed oral strategy respectively. In general, the respondents had confidence in their English speaking ability.

4.2. Comparison between Genders, Grades, and Regions

Table 2 shows the independent sample t-test related to gender. In general, the results between male and female respondents were relatively similar and there was no statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$). Both male and female respondents agreed that their oral ability was good in these 9 aspects and they both had confidence. In Table 3, in terms of expression, male and female respondents rated 2.06 and 2.01 for narration respectively, while the two rated 2.28 and 2.22 for interaction respectively. It suggested that both male and female respondents tended to be most positive about their narrative ability and least positive about their interaction ability.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Subscales	Aspects	Mean	SD
Expression	Description	2.06	0.95
	Narration	2.04	0.99
	Exposition	2.17	0.99
	Instruction	2.14	1.00
	Argumentation	2.12	0.98
	Interaction	2.25	0.96
	Overall	2.22	0.99
Strategy	Planning	1.99	0.95
	Execution	2.32	0.97
	Assessment	2.09	0.96
	Overall	2.20	0.92

Table 2. Differences in Gender

Subscales	Aspects	t	Sig.	Mean Difference
Expression	Description	-0.68	0.50	-0.07
	Narration	-0.47	0.64	-0.05
	Exposition	-0.16	0.87	-0.02
	Instruction	-0.14	0.89	-0.02
	Argumentation	-0.96	0.34	-0.11
	Interaction	-0.62	0.54	-0.07
	Overall	-0.46	0.65	-0.05
Strategy	Planning	-1.75	0.08	-0.19
	Execution	-0.26	0.80	-0.03
	Assessment	-0.17	0.87	-0.02
	Overall	-0.65	0.58	-0.06

However, in terms of strategy, male respondents rated 2.08 and 2.34 for planning and execution respectively, while female respondents rated 2.08 and 2.31 for assessment and execution respectively, implying that both male and female respondents tended to have the least confidence in their execution strategy, but the most highly rated strategies were different.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Gender

Subscales	Aspects	Genders	Mean	SD
Expression	Description	Female	2.02	0.92
		Male	2.09	0.98
	Narration	Female	2.01	0.98
		Male	2.06	1.00
	Exposition	Female	2.16	0.95
		Male	2.17	1.03
	Instruction	Female	2.13	1.00
		Male	2.14	1.00
	Argumentation	Female	2.06	0.89
		Male	2.17	1.06
	Interaction	Female	2.22	0.97
		Male	2.28	0.96
	Overall	Female	2.19	0.97
		Male	2.24	1.00
Strategy	Planning	Female	1.89	0.91
		Male	2.08	0.98
	Execution	Female	2.31	0.92
		Male	2.34	1.01
	Assessment	Female	2.08	0.93
		Male	2.10	0.98
	Overall	Female	2.16	0.89
		Male	2.22	0.95

The insignificant difference in self-evaluation between males and females in this study further confirms previous researches. Both Alderson (2005) and Jensen, Denver, Mees and Werther (2011) proved the gender differences to be insignificant. Similarly, Han & Yuan (2022) found that the differences between male and female students were not significant and the gender differences had little impact on self-evaluation. This is somewhat inconsistent with Namaziandost, Abedi and Nasri (2019) that female students performed better than their male counterparts in fluency and vice versa in accuracy.

Interestingly, significant differences were spotted among students in three different grades. In Table 4, there were significant differences between Grades 7 and 8 ($p=0.00<0.05$). The mean differences between them were -0.54 in oral expression and -0.64 in oral strategy. This indicates that Grade 7 had a more positive attitude towards self-assessment than Grade 8, therefore, it could be inferred that the former were more confident than the latter.

Significant differences were identified between Grades 8 and 9 ($p=0.00<0.05$). The mean differences between them were 0.80 in oral expression and 0.87 oral strategy respectively. This seems to suggest that Grade 8 had a less positive attitude towards their overall speaking ability than Grade 9. However, the differences between Grades 7 and 9 were not significant ($p>0.05$), except the execution strategy ($p=0.00<0.05$).

Table 4. Differences in Grade

Subscales		Grades		Mean Difference	Sig.	Std.Error
Expression	Description	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.60	0.00*	0.13
			Grade 9	0.06	0.93	0.11
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.66	0.00*	0.13
	Narration	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.62	0.00*	0.14
			Grade 9	0.14	0.56	0.12
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.76	0.00*	0.13
	Exposition	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.56	0.00*	0.14
			Grade 9	0.16	0.41	0.12
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.72	0.00*	0.13
	Instruction	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.45	0.00*	0.14
			Grade 9	0.28	0.07	0.12
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.73	0.00*	0.13
	Argumentation	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.65	0.00*	0.14
			Grade 9	0.19	0.27	0.12
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.84	0.00*	0.13
	Interaction	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.64	0.00*	0.13
			Grade 9	0.22	0.16	0.11
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.86	0.00*	0.13
Overall	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.54	0.00*	0.14	
		Grade 9	0.26	0.10	0.12	
	Grade 8	Grade 9	0.80	0.00*	0.13	
Strategy	Planning	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.57	0.00*	0.14
			Grade 9	0.11	0.69	0.11
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.68	0.00*	0.13
	Execution	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.49	0.00*	0.13
			Grade 9	0.45	0.00*	0.12
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.94	0.00*	0.12
	Assessment	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.50	0.00*	0.13
			Grade 9	0.34	0.10	0.11
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.84	0.00*	0.12
	Overall	Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.64	0.00*	0.13
			Grade 9	0.23	0.08	0.11
		Grade 8	Grade 9	0.87	0.00*	0.12

The interview further verifies this point. Twelve of the 36 interviewees believed that their English speaking ability was not very good, including 3 students in Grade 7, 4 students in the ninth grade, and 5 students in Grade 8, which confirmed the finding from the questionnaire that Grade 8 were the least confident among the three grades. This may be due to increased difficulty in textbooks, a lack of interest and motivation in learning among students and a decrease in students' opportunities for oral expression.

Table 5. Differences in Region

Subscales	Aspects	t	Sig.	Mean Difference
Expression	Description	7.33	0.00*	0.73
	Narration	5.84	0.00*	0.62
	Exposition	6.30	0.00*	0.67
	Instruction	5.71	0.00*	0.62
	Argumentation	5.84	0.00*	0.62
	Interaction	6.50	0.00*	0.67
	Overall	6.48	0.00*	0.68
Strategy	Planning	6.13	0.00*	0.63
	Execution	6.80	0.00*	0.70
	Assessment	6.77	0.00*	0.69
	Overall	6.10	0.00*	0.60

When it comes to the region where the participating schools locate, there were significant differences in self-evaluation among students in urban and rural areas ($p=0.00<0.05$). As shown in Table 5, rural students had a higher self-evaluation score than urban students, with mean differences of 0.68 in oral expression and 0.60 in oral strategy. This means that although rural students agreed that their oral skills were good, they were less confident than urban students. As an interviewee from the urban school stated, "I can pronounce English correctly as I have learnt English from a very young age." In contrast, none of the rural students made such comments. Given the relatively later age of learning English in the rural areas, this seems to suggest that students' ability and confidence in their speaking is somehow related to their exposure to the language and the availability of the language resources.

The inadequate confidence in oral communication shown by rural students is also revealed in Gao, Hu, Wu, Lu, Su (2016) and Yu (2019). Gao et al (2016) attributed this inadequacy to rural students' complex of inferiority in their overall English proficiency. To tackle these problems, Yu (2019) emphasized the need to enhance the confidence of rural students by providing more chances of using English orally in class and encouraging students to participate in oral competitions. A close link can be made between students' assessment of their speaking ability and their self-confidence, which requires teachers' urgent attention to take effective measures to boost their confidence and encourage them to use English in real life.

4.3. The Impact of CSE on Students' Speaking Development

From students' responses to how to improve their English speaking ability after completing the questionnaire, it could be inferred that students could gain inspiration for improving their oral English through CSE. The respondents realized that their shortcomings might lie in oral interaction and execution strategy through questionnaires, and then proposed more adjustment measures and methods based on the statements in these two aspects. As far as oral interaction is concerned, students believed that various ways should be adopted to increase daily English conversations, such as communicating with foreigners on the internet, watching English movies, increasing opportunities to speak in English, creating an active English atmosphere, and practicing in simulated scenarios. In terms of execution strategy, students

thought that they should master certain communication strategies, such as using more transitional language and pauses to increase coherence, and using appropriate gestures and movements to express themselves.

In addition, the respondents attached great importance to the value of vocabulary knowledge in the CSE speaking scale, believing that they should read and memorize more words, set phrases and short articles, read more picture books, use English dictionaries more often, and pay more attention to English slogans in public places.

It was also demonstrated from the interview that rural students seemed to be limited by vocabulary and did not mention the role of grammar knowledge, idioms, and terms in improving their English speaking ability. On the contrary, urban students not only focused on vocabulary, but also emphasized communication, multimedia, and assistance from others, implying that they were more aware of both speaking strategies and learning strategies, thus they might take more specific measures as suggested in the CSE Speaking Scale.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

On the basis of the self-ratings against the CSE Speaking Scale can-do statements, this study has revealed that junior school students had a positive comment on their own ability in terms of both oral expression and oral strategy. There was no statistically significant difference in genders, but significant differences between Grades 8 and 9 and between Grades 8 and 7 were identified. When it comes to regional differences, rural junior high school students were more conservative and showed less confidence than urban junior high school students.

In general, junior high school students believed that the CSE Speaking Scale could help improve their oral proficiency. The self-assessment practice enabled them to gain a new understanding of the scale, which means that using CSE as a self-assessment tool could help them diagnose their strong and weak areas in speaking. Moreover, the respondents could clearly propose measures to improve their oral proficiency based on the feedback of the questionnaire.

5.2. Suggestions

Students should be encouraged to actively participate in oral practice and fully utilize the CSE Speaking Scale for self-assessment. The teacher-dominated English classes in China have resulted in students' insufficient knowledge about self-evaluation, and the role of self-evaluation in promoting self-directed learning cannot be fully realized. It is suggested that students should be provided with self-assessment forms to assess their speaking performance regularly and help them develop new goals and internalize evaluation standards. Moreover, before students' self-assessment, teachers should provide guidance on the CSE speaking scale and training on self-evaluation. During the process students should be encouraged to rate themselves in an interactive and low-pressure manner. After students' self-evaluation, teachers should analyze and provide feedback based on the results of their self-evaluation.

Teachers should be aware of grade differences. It is necessary for teachers to pay attention to the connections between grades, not only focusing on the ability development requirements of this stage, but also laying the foundation for the next stage. Teachers should give students more opportunities to retell the main idea of the text, in order to cultivate their oral narration skills. At the same time, in order to improve students' oral argumentation, teachers should cultivate their habit of observing daily life, accumulate oral vocabulary, and encourage students to communicate in English outside the classroom. In addition, the use of oral execution strategy is also very important, and teachers should guide students to use multimedia and word creation methods to assist in oral communication.

Teachers should help improve the self-confidence of rural students from three aspects: teaching content, methods, and evaluation methods. In terms of teaching content, teachers should enrich teaching content, expand rural students' oral English contact, and actively guide students to use tools such as English dictionaries, English movies, and music. In order to enhance students' interest in learning oral English, teachers should update their teaching methods, flexibly use and design oral activities, create oral contexts and organize various oral activities. Moreover, teachers should train rural students to conduct self-assessment using the CSE speaking scale as a standard to correct their errors and identify feasible speaking methods. Teachers should also combine student self-assessment with other evaluation methods to maximize the effectiveness of student self-assessment.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study mainly combines quantitative and qualitative analyses, but there are some limitations. Although the number of students is acceptable, the number of schools in the selected school area is insufficient, with only two involved. In terms of student interviews, due to students' hesitation and concern to share personal views, some students did not make in-depth comments about their feelings. Therefore, future studies are suggested to include more schools from various areas and take measures to ensure students are familiar and comfortable with the interview process. Further exploration is also needed to maximize the effectiveness of combining the CSE Speaking Scale with learners' self-assessment of speaking ability.

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