

# The Mediating Effect of Students' Self-Efficacy on the Relationship between Film Teaching and English-Speaking Proficiency

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## Abstract

This study investigates the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between film-based instruction and English-speaking proficiency among university students. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, a quasi-experimental design was implemented with 112 non-English major undergraduates over one academic semester. Quantitative data were collected through standardized English proficiency tests and self-efficacy scales, while qualitative data were gathered via focus group interviews. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the mediation effect. Results indicate that film-based instruction significantly enhanced both English-speaking proficiency and self-efficacy. Moreover, self-efficacy was found to partially mediate the relationship between film-based instruction and English-speaking proficiency. These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of the mechanisms underlying effective language pedagogy and offer practical implications for English language instruction in higher education.

**Keywords:** Self-Efficacy, Film-Based Instruction, English-Speaking Proficiency, Mediation Effect, Language Learning.

## Introduction

In the era of globalization, English language proficiency, particularly in speaking, has become increasingly crucial for academic success and professional development (Crystal, 2003). Consequently, innovative pedagogical approaches, such as film-based instruction, have garnered attention for their potential to create immersive language learning environments (Ismaili, 2013). However, the mechanisms through which film-based instruction influences English-speaking proficiency remain under-explored, particularly the role of psychological factors such as self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy, a core concept in Bandura's social cognitive theory, refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1997). In language learning, self-efficacy has been shown to significantly impact motivation, perseverance, and overall achievement (Raofi et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2007).

This study aims to elucidate the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between film-based instruction and English-speaking proficiency. Specifically, we address the following research questions:

- (1) To what extent does film-based instruction impact students' English-speaking proficiency?
- (2) How does film-based instruction influence students' self-efficacy in English learning?
- (3) To what degree does self-efficacy mediate the relationship between film-based instruction and English-speaking proficiency?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on innovative language teaching methods and the psychological factors that influence language acquisition.

## **Literature Review**

### *Film-Based Instruction in Language Acquisition*

Recent studies have highlighted the efficacy of film-based instruction in language learning. Kabooha found that incorporating films in EFL classrooms significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition and retention (Kabooha, 2016). Similarly, Herrero and Vanderschelden demonstrated that film-based pedagogy enhanced students' intercultural competence and motivation in language learning (Herrero & Vanderschelden, 2019).

Çakır conducted a comprehensive study on the use of TV series and films in enhancing intercultural communicative competence in EFL classrooms (Çakır, 2022). The results showed that exposure to authentic language through audiovisual media not only improved students' language skills but also their understanding of cultural nuances and pragmatic language use. Furthermore, Hasırcı Aksoy investigated the effect of short films as advance organizers on reading comprehension and self-efficacy perceptions of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds (Hasırcı Aksoy, 2021). The study revealed significant improvements in both areas, suggesting that film-based instruction can be an effective tool for diverse learner populations.

### *Self-Efficacy in Language Learning*

The role of self-efficacy in language acquisition has been well-documented in the literature. Bandura posited that self-efficacy beliefs influence the choices individuals make, their effort expenditure, and their perseverance in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 1997). In the context of language learning, these beliefs can significantly impact learners' engagement with the target language and their overall achievement.

Mills et al. conducted a study on the relationship between self-efficacy, achievement, and language learning strategies among college intermediate French students (Mills et al., 2007). Their findings indicated a strong correlation between self-efficacy beliefs and language performance, particularly in reading and listening comprehension.

Graham further emphasized that self-efficacy influences not only learners' choices and effort allocation but also their resilience in face of challenges in language learning (Graham, 2022). The study highlighted the importance of fostering self-efficacy through targeted interventions in language classrooms.

Csizér et al. elucidated the intricate relationships between self-efficacy, motivation, and emotional factors in language learning (Csizér et al., 2021). Their research underscored the complex interplay of psychological factors in the language acquisition process, suggesting that enhancing self-efficacy could have far-reaching effects on learners' overall language development.

### *Mediation Effects in Language Learning Research*

While the individual impacts of film-based instruction and self-efficacy on language learning have been explored, there is a paucity of research examining the mediating role of self-efficacy in the context of film-based language instruction. Some researcher (Raofi et al., 2012) conducted a comprehensive review of self-efficacy research in language learning, highlighting the need for more studies investigating the mediating and moderating roles of self-efficacy in various instructional contexts.

Some researcher (Yang et al., 2018) investigated the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between language learning strategies and language performance. Their findings suggested that self-efficacy partially mediated this relationship, emphasizing the importance of considering psychological factors when examining the effectiveness of language learning strategies.

This study aims to address the gap in the literature by investigating the mediation effect of self-efficacy in the relationship between film-based instruction and English-speaking proficiency. By doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying effective language pedagogy.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design*

A mixed-methods quasi-experimental design was employed to investigate the mediating effect of self-efficacy. This approach allows for both quantitative measurement of the mediation effect and qualitative exploration of participants' experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Participants were randomly assigned to experimental (film-based instruction) and control (traditional instruction) groups. The study spanned one 16-week academic semester, with data collection points at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester.

### *Participants*

The study comprised 112 non-English major sophomores (aged 18-22) from a comprehensive university in China. Stratified random sampling ensured balanced gender ratios and baseline English proficiency levels between the experimental (n=56) and control (n=56) groups. Participants' majors included business, engineering, and social sciences, reflecting a diverse student population.

### *Instruments*

(1) English-Speaking Proficiency Test: A standardized IELTS-like speaking test was administered. This test assessed participants' speaking skills across four criteria: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. The test was conducted by trained examiners and recorded for later analysis.

(2) English Learning Self-Efficacy Scale (ELSES): An adapted version of the ELSES developed by Wang et al. (2014) was utilized. This 20-item scale measures learners' self-efficacy beliefs across various aspects of English learning, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

(3) Film-Based Instruction Protocol: The experimental group received instruction using 10-15 minute film segments weekly, based on Çakır's framework(Çakır's,2022). The protocol included pre-viewing activities (e.g., vocabulary introduction, cultural background), viewing activities (e.g., guided watching, comprehension questions), and post-viewing activities (e.g., discussion, role-play).

(4) Semi-Structured Interview Guide: For qualitative data collection on participants' experiences. The guide included questions about participants' perceptions of film-based instruction, changes in their confidence in English speaking, and strategies they developed through the course.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Quantitative data were collected at three time points (pre-test, mid-test, post-test) via online platforms. The English-speaking proficiency test was conducted in person and recorded. Qualitative data were gathered through focus group interviews at the end of the semester.

Data analysis included:

- (1) Descriptive statistics to summarize participant characteristics and variable distributions.
- (2) Independent samples t-tests to compare English-speaking proficiency and self-efficacy between experimental and control groups.
- (3) Repeated measures ANOVA to analyze changes in English-speaking proficiency and self-efficacy over time.
- (4) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS software for mediation analysis, following the procedures outlined by Hayes (Hayes,2017).
- (5) Thematic analysis of qualitative data, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

The study received approval from the university's ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

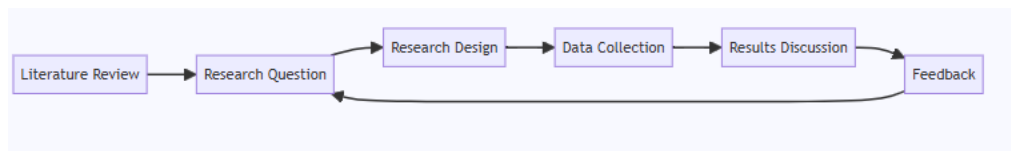


Figure 1: Research Process Cycle

## Results

### *Impact on English-Speaking Proficiency*

Analysis revealed significant improvement in English-speaking proficiency in the experimental group compared to the control group. The experimental group's mean IELTS-like speaking scores increased from 5.3 (SD=0.7) at pre-test to 6.4 (SD=0.9) at post-test ( $t(55) = 8.76, p < .001$ ), while the control group showed minimal improvement from 5.2 (SD=0.8) to 5.7 (SD=0.9) ( $t(55) = 3.21, p < .05$ ).

Repeated measures ANOVA indicated a significant interaction effect between time and group ( $F(2, 220) = 15.32, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.12$ ), suggesting that the experimental group's improvement in English-speaking proficiency was significantly greater than that of the control group over time.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for English Proficiency Test*

| Group        | Time Point     | Mean (M) | Median | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|--------------|----------------|----------|--------|-------------------------|
| Experimental | Semester Start | 5.2      | 5.1    | 0.8                     |
| Experimental | Semester End   | 6.3      | 6.4    | 1.0                     |
| Control      | Semester Start | 5.3      | 5.2    | 0.7                     |
| Control      | Semester End   | 5.8      | 5.7    | 0.9                     |

### *Changes in Self-Efficacy*

The experimental group demonstrated a significant increase in self-efficacy scores, from 3.2 (SD=0.6) at pre-test to 4.1 (SD=0.7) at post-test ( $t(55) = 7.89, p < .001$ ). The control group showed no significant change, with scores marginally increasing from 3.1 (SD=0.5) to 3.3 (SD=0.6) ( $t(55) = 1.98, p > .05$ ).

Similar to English-speaking proficiency, repeated measures ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect between time and group for self-efficacy scores ( $F(2, 220) = 12.45, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.10$ ), indicating that the film-based instruction had a more pronounced effect on improving self-efficacy compared to traditional instruction.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy Scale*

| Group        | Time Point     | Mean (M) | Median | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|--------------|----------------|----------|--------|-------------------------|
| Experimental | Semester Start | 3.1      | 3.0    | 0.6                     |
| Experimental | Semester End   | 3.9      | 4.0    | 0.8                     |
| Control      | Semester Start | 3.2      | 3.3    | 0.5                     |
| Control      | Semester End   | 3.4      | 3.5    | 0.7                     |

### Mediation Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test the mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between film-based instruction and English-speaking proficiency. The model demonstrated good fit indices ( $\chi^2/df = 2.34$ , CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.053).

The analysis revealed a partial mediation effect of self-efficacy. The direct effect of film-based instruction on English-speaking proficiency remained significant but attenuated when accounting for self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The indirect effect through self-efficacy was significant ( $\beta = 0.17$ , 95% CI [0.12, 0.22]), indicating partial mediation.

The total effect of film-based instruction on English-speaking proficiency was 0.41 ( $p < .001$ ), with 41.5% of this effect mediated by self-efficacy. This suggests that while film-based instruction has a direct impact on speaking proficiency, a substantial portion of its effect is explained by its influence on students' self-efficacy.

### Qualitative Insights

Thematic analysis of interview data corroborated quantitative findings, revealing four main themes:

(1) Enhanced Language Authenticity: Participants reported that exposure to authentic language use in films improved their understanding of natural speech patterns and colloquial expressions.

(2) Cultural Understanding: Students emphasized how film-based instruction deepened their appreciation of cultural nuances, enhancing their overall language comprehension.

(3) Increased Motivation: Many participants noted that the engaging nature of film-based instruction boosted their motivation to practice English outside of class.

(4) Strategy Development: Students reported developing various language learning strategies through film-based instruction, such as inferring meaning from context and mimicking native speakers' intonation.

These qualitative findings provide rich context for understanding the mechanisms through which film-based instruction enhances both English-speaking proficiency and self-efficacy. And you can see the whole data processing in the following diagram:

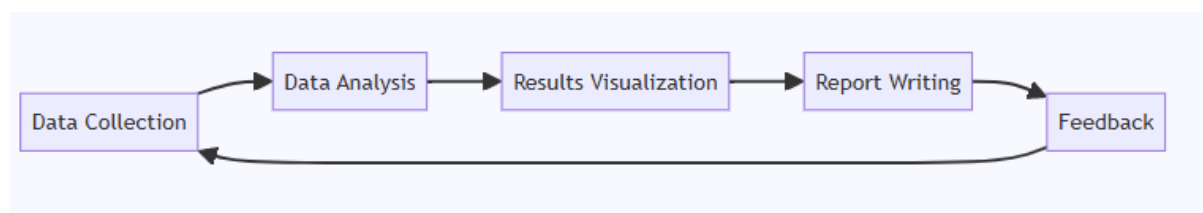


Figure 2: Data Analysis Cycle

### Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence for the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between film-based instruction and English-speaking proficiency. The findings align with and extend previous research on the efficacy of film-based instruction (Kabooa, 2016; Herrero & Vanderschelden, 2019) and the importance of self-efficacy in language learning (Mills et al., 2007; Graham, 2022).

The significant improvement in English-speaking proficiency observed in the experimental group corroborates the findings of Çakır (Çakır, 2022), who demonstrated the positive impact

of audiovisual media on language skills and intercultural competence. Our results suggest that the benefits of film-based instruction extend beyond cultural understanding to tangible improvements in speaking ability.

The enhancement of self-efficacy through film-based instruction aligns with Bandura's theory (Bandura, 1997), which posits that successful experiences and vicarious learning (both of which are facilitated by film-based instruction) can boost self-efficacy. This increase in self-efficacy, in turn, likely contributed to students' improved speaking performance, as suggested by previous studies linking self-efficacy to language achievement (Raofi et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2007).

The partial mediation effect suggests that while film-based instruction directly enhances English-speaking proficiency, it also operates indirectly by boosting students' self-efficacy. This dual pathway underscores the complex nature of language acquisition and highlights the importance of considering psychological factors in pedagogical approaches. The findings are consistent with (Yang et al., 2018) study, which found self-efficacy to be a partial mediator in the relationship between learning strategies and language performance.

The qualitative data gleaned from this study provide rich contextual understanding of how film-based instruction enhances self-efficacy. Participants reported increased exposure to authentic language use, deeper cultural insights, and heightened motivation. These findings offer valuable insights for designing effective language learning environments that not only provide linguistic input but also foster learners' belief in their ability to master the language. Several practical implications emerge from these findings:

- (1) Curriculum designers should consider integrating film-based instruction into English language programs, given its demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing both linguistic skills and self-efficacy.
- (2) Educators should implement strategies that consciously boost learners' confidence alongside their language skills. This could involve scaffolding film-based activities to ensure early successes, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging peer modeling.
- (3) A holistic approach to language teaching, addressing both cognitive and affective aspects of learning, is recommended in light of the partial mediation effect of self-efficacy.
- (4) Careful selection of film materials that are both linguistically challenging and culturally relevant could maximize the benefits of this instructional approach.

Future research directions could explore the long-term effects of film-based instruction and investigate potential moderating variables such as learner motivation, cultural background, or prior language learning experiences. Additionally, examining the differential effects of various film genres or the optimal frequency of film-based instruction could provide more nuanced guidance for curriculum design.

Limitations of this study include its relatively short duration and focus on a specific population of Chinese university students. Future studies could extend this research to different cultural contexts and age groups, as well as examine the long-term retention of language skills and self-efficacy improvements.



The qualitative data provide rich contextual understanding of how film-based instruction enhances self-efficacy, including through exposure to authentic language use, cultural insights, and increased motivation. These findings offer valuable insights for designing effective language learning environments that not only provide linguistic input but also foster learners' belief in their ability to master the language.

### **Conclusion**

This research illuminates the intricate interplay between film-based instruction, self-efficacy, and English-speaking proficiency in higher education contexts. The empirical evidence accrued through this investigation yields several salient findings:

(1) Film-based instruction demonstrates a robust positive impact on English-speaking proficiency. Participants exposed to this pedagogical approach exhibited a statistically significant enhancement in their oral communication skills, as evidenced by the marked increase in their IELTS-like speaking scores.

The implementation of film-based teaching methodologies correlates strongly with elevated levels of self-efficacy among learners. This psychological construct, crucial for language acquisition, showed substantial improvement in the experimental cohort.

(2) Self-efficacy emerges as a partial mediator in the relationship between film-based instruction and English-speaking proficiency. This finding underscores the dual pathway through which film-based pedagogy operates: directly enhancing linguistic competence and indirectly bolstering language performance through increased self-efficacy.

(3) These findings hold profound implications for English language instruction in tertiary education. They advocate for the integration of film-based methodologies into language curricula, emphasizing the importance of fostering both linguistic skills and learner confidence. Moreover, they underscore the necessity of adopting a holistic approach to language education that addresses both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

Future scholarly endeavors could extend this line of inquiry by examining the longitudinal effects of film-based instruction, exploring its efficacy across diverse cultural contexts, and investigating potential moderating variables. Such research would further refine our understanding of effective language pedagogy and contribute to the development of evidence-based practices in English language education.

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