University Students' Perception of Online Speaking Assessment

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to investigate students' perception of online speaking assessment in terms of satisfaction, confidence, and use of technology. The study involved third-year Bachelor of English students from a public university in Malaysia. A descriptive case study methodology was employed to fulfill the research objectives. Data was primarily collected through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, complemented by semi-structured interviews. The study found that students had both positive and negative perceptions towards online speaking assessment. On the positive side, a majority of students reported that online speaking assessment gave them greater confidence and comfort, helping them towards improved performance. The findings demonstrate that the online environment can mitigate student anxiety and bolster language proficiency. Additionally, the study underscores the necessity for students to develop technical skills due to online assessment, thereby highlighting the direct impact of such assessment on students' technological proficiency. Conversely, students' negative perception centered on technical challenges such as poor internet connectivity and technical problems, both of which highlight practical obstacles in online education. The findings of the study have implications for Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis in understanding the impact of emotions on speaking performance. This study has significance for educators to improve methods of online speaking assessment by addressing challenges faced by learners. Improving the online mode of evaluation would help

sustain the future of online education.

1. Introduction

Speaking can be seen as the most important skill to master when compared to other skills (listening, reading, and writing) in the English language. Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) define speaking as an interactive process of meaning construction that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Speaking proficiency can be measured through assessment. Assessment plays an important role in education. In the academic world, speaking assessment is very commonly adopted by lecturers, especially in higher education. The need for synchronous speaking assessment has arisen as a result of the communicative aspect being one of the primary concerns in learning for 21st century skill enhancement. One of the important aspects of language learning is that students must be able to express their ideas or opinions in spontaneous responses when communicating with others (Loranc-Paszylk, 2015).

Furthermore, one of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on education is the use of online platforms as a means for teaching and learning replacing face-to-face physical teaching and learning. As the pandemic hit the world in 2020, not only all teaching and learning processes but also the assessment of students at the tertiary level was transferred to online platforms (Fitriani et al., 2020; Lisyowati et al., 2021; Mahapatra, 2021). The new online speaking assessment was largely inspired by the rising demand for oral proficiency testing and the requirement to provide speaking assessment that can be administered quickly and efficiently while retaining high quality (Galaczi & Evelina, 2010). Even though studies claim that online speaking assessment reduces the workload of instructors as teachers can easily conduct the assessment with the help of technological tools (Bahadorfar et al., 2014; Kuning, 2019; Korkmaz, 2022), the perception of students towards this type of assessment is lacking, although crucial in the form of feedback for teachers. In the context of learning, student perception of learning is important because learner variables such as attitude, motivation, affect, anxiety and willingness to communicate are factors that may influence their learning process (Mitchell et al., 2019). As a result of the importance given to the learner in the learning process, the current study was carried out with the aim of investigating students' perception of online speaking assessment in terms of satisfaction, confidence and use of technology.

Several recent studies and surveys have been conducted to investigate students' perception towards online speaking assessment (Baron, 2020; Fitriani et al., 2020). However, there is a lack of studies that have been published to highlight the perception of students in English studies programs in developing countries, particularly in Malaysia. Online speaking assessment can have a negative impact on the validity of a test due to task limitations and lack of investigation into students' satisfaction with the grading and evaluation system. Moreover, studies reveal online speaking assessment causes pressure and anxiety, which can lead to lower-quality language production. For that reason, it is crucial for studies to

investigate students' confidence with test assessments for future implementation of tests. Students also have positive and negative feelings on the use of technology. There is also a need for researchers to investigate perception towards technology use to effectively utilize technology in online assessment.

In sum, the gaps in the literature with regard to online speaking assessment, that have contributed to the current study being conducted are: (a) Although perception of students towards online speaking assessment is important for enhancing teaching and learning, there are a lack of studies that investigate students' perception about it, especially with regard to students' satisfaction of online grading and technology use in speaking assessment. (b) Literature reveals that online speaking assessment causes pressure and anxiety that can affect students' confidence and feelings about technology use for assessment, that can in turn, affect students' language production.

The current study investigates the perception towards online speaking assessment of students pursuing bachelor programs in English at Universiti Putra Malaysia, specifically, satisfaction and confidence of these students, and the use of technology in the execution of online assessment. Hence, the aim of the current study is to investigate students' perception of online speaking assessment in terms of satisfaction, confidence and use of technology. The research questions of the present study are as follows:

1.   What is the perception of students towards online speaking assessment in terms of satisfaction?

2.   What is the perception of students towards online speaking assessment in terms of confidence?

3.   What is the perception of students towards the use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessment?

2. Literature Review

This section presents related theories of the present study. It is structured presenting four subsections about students' perception, satisfaction, confidence, and the use of technology. This section also discusses related past studies that have been done in this field.

2.1 Online Assessment

Online assessment has emerged as the primary mode of examination in higher education institutions, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Online assessment is defined as a systematic method of acquiring information about a learner and learning processes in order to develop conclusions about the learner's dispositions (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023). Online assessment evaluates students using digital tools or internet-based methods. It represents a modern form of assessment, in contrast to traditional paper-and-pencil methods (Wibowo & Novitasari, 2021). Online assessments serve not only as tools to enhance student engagement and outcomes through instructional interventions, but they are also fundamental to the learning process itself, going beyond mere evaluation (Chen et al., 2021; Caspari-Sadeghi et al., 2021). Online speaking assessments received much more attention compared to other

skills, during the pandemic. The advancements in technology have simplified the process of conducting oral exams in a digital environment. In the online environment, student speaking performance can be assessed in two ways. First, online synchronous speaking assessment requires students to spontaneously articulate their thoughts in real-time (Korkmaz, 2020). Second, in asynchronous speaking assessment, students record their responses at their leisure and submit them later for review (Du & Zhang, 2022). Both methods cater to different aspects of speaking skills and student preferences. In the context of the current study, the online speaking assessments involved a synchronous method in the form of live speeches on videoconference and an asynchronous method in the form of video recorded speeches. Both methods are further explained in the Methodology section.

2.2 Perception

Studies examining students' perception are not new, particularly in the field of education. Prior research has investigated the relationship between students' perception of the learning environment and its impact on learning outcomes (Ramsden, 1992; Prosser and Trigwell, 1997; Entwistle, 1998). The term *perception* is a noun. Wikipedia (2008) defines perception as "the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information". In a simple way, perception involves the way one sees the world and it is a study of how sensory information is processed into perceptual experiences. How we perceive others and the world around us has a huge impact on our emotional state and our behavior. Our perception defines how we see the world, and how we interact with others.

In an educational setting, students are the main and the most important resource in the learning process (Kurniawan, 2015). The learning process begins with perception. Students' perception is more essential especially at the tertiary level because it has a huge impact on understanding. Students' perception is a powerful tool for measuring effective teaching practices in the classroom (König and Pflanzl, 2016). A cross-sectional study conducted by Ahmad et al. (2018) stated that students' perception of the learning environment influences their selection of learning approaches, which correlate with their academic performance. Students with higher academic achievements had more positive perception regarding their education while low-achieving students exhibited more negative perception of education. Therefore, it is critical for this study to investigate students' perspectives of online speaking assessment, particularly assessment involving English-language programs.

2.3 Satisfaction

The concept of *satisfaction* has been long studied in the field of psychology (Myerson, 1943). Learning satisfaction is defined as a feeling or attitude of learners that their desires and needs can be fulfilled in learning activities or processes (Topala & Tomozii, 2014). Following this, student satisfaction with online learning evaluation and grading systems has been widely explored in order to ensure a fair and reliable system. This is because a few concerns were raised regarding the current evaluation system considering technical failures and cheating possibilities that might occur during assessments (Afacan Adanır et al., 2020). Based on observations from past studies, the results offered useful insights related to students' satisfaction levels in online speaking assessments. Shofatunnisa et al., (2021) in their study

showed that students were highly satisfied with online speaking assessment because it provided them more flexibility and convenience in completing the tasks as well as to upload their responses anytime and from any location they preferred. By reviewing past studies such as Azmina (2017), Peimani & Kamalipour (2022), Baleni (2015) and Afacan Adanir et al., (2020), it shows that students' satisfaction is also included in perception of students towards online learning and assessment. Therefore, the current study includes satisfaction of students towards online speaking assessment as a variable worthy of study about English program students towards online assessment.

2.4 Confidence

There are several categories of students' perception as stated by Azmina (2017) that should be taken into consideration to improve the quality of online assessment. One of the categories that should be considered is students' confidence in taking online speaking assessment. Korkmaz (2022) stated students feel more confident after doing many online speaking assessments as they start to make fewer mistakes. Students were able to choose correct English vocabulary and made fewer grammatical mistakes. Non-verbal communication is also influenced by self-confidence of a student. On the other hand, a study conducted by Nova (2020) found that there is negative perception toward online speaking assessment, one of which is that this kind of assessment raises students' nervousness. Nervousness is also acknowledged by lecturers, who verified that, at first, students answered the questions with shaky voices and avoided eye contact, which they note are signs of low confidence. As a result of varying findings, the present study includes students' perception of online assessment in terms of confidence as a variable worthy of study.

2.5 Use of Technology

Online assessment could be considered one of the uses of technology to ease the evaluation process in education. Technology has evolved, and convenient online assessment methods have begun to be used. Implementing speaking exams synchronously via online video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams can accommodate real-time interaction between the lecturer and student (Subrahmanyam & Bandu, 2021; Yee et al., 2022).

There are several studies that have explored some of the challenges that are specifically associated with implementing an effective online speaking assessment. These studies found that use of technology can make students violate academic integrity during speaking assessment as some students affix pieces of paper to the side of the computer screen and read answers from there (Forrester, 2020) and do their tasks in short-cut ways without working on them (Korkmaz, 2022). A study conducted by Nova (2022) stated that use of technology raises students' nervousness during speaking even though they are well-prepared because they are worried about technical problems that could happen like disruption in internet connection, limited quota, and ineffective earphones. Moreover, the advantages of technology reduce the purity of students' English-speaking skills as students are allowed to edit their videos on Canva software and YouTube appliances (Shofatunnisa et al. 2021). Due to variations in findings, this research includes as a variable the perception of students on the

use of technology in the execution of online assessment.

2.6 Related Studies

There has been much research that has been carried out by a number of scholars regarding issues related to online speaking assessment.

Research on "Perspectives and Experiences of EFL Preparatory Class Students on Online Formative Task-Based Assessment of Speaking Skills" by Korkmaz (2022) investigates perception and experiences of Turkish EFL learners regarding online formative task-based speech assessment (OFTBSA) practice in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research was carried out because there was a lack of studies on online assessment of speaking skills in Turkish context and worldwide, and a scarcity of studies on the benefits and drawbacks of the implementation of OFTBSA on EFL learners. The study employed the qualitative case study design and concluded with regard to challenges that the key barrier pointed out by the vast majority of students was low or poor internet connection. Hence, the study signified the importance of empowering EFL learners to become digitally competent examinees by providing them with a stress-free online assessment environment.

Mishu, Abdullah, Hakami and Chowdury (2022) conducted research on "The Impact of Online Presentations on Reducing the Introverted EFL Learners' Stress and Anxiety.". The study aimed to focus on how online presentations have a positive effect on the anxiety of students. The researchers collected quantitative data from 239 English undergraduate students, primarily female students who are introverted by nature and experience anxiety and stress on a regular basis. The results showed that online presentation reduces introverted students' anxiety and stress to a great extent as they feel relieved if they speak to the teacher alone or behind their computer screens. The study also discovered that online presentations improve their spoken English proficiency because contemplative and quiet introverted learners' expectations were met well through online oral presentation. The researcher concluded that by introducing online presentations into coursework, teachers can help these students enhance their communication abilities while staying within their comfort zone.

Dermo (2009) did a survey on "e-Assessment and the Student Learning Experience: A Survey of Student perception of e-Assessment". The aim of the survey was to identify possible risks in planning e-assessments, as well as to gauge student opinion. The researcher used pragmatic methodology to collect data from students who had taken part in online assessment during the academic year 2007-2008. The survey looked at six main dimensions in order to operationalize the main concept. The six dimensions are affective factors, validity, practicality, reliability and fairness, security, and pedagogy. The results showed that there are overwhelming negative results from the dimensions of affective factors and pedagogy. However, under the headings of validity, practicality, security and reliability, the findings indicate that positive feelings are slightly stronger than negative feelings about e-assessment. This survey also concludes that age and gender did not significantly affect student responses in any of the areas studied.

Nova (2020) carried out research on "Videoconferencing for Speaking Assessment Medium:

Alternative and Drawback?". The study is about unraveling the perception and obstacles faced during the implementation of videoconferencing as a speaking assessment medium. This qualitative research with a snapshot case study design includes both students and teachers as participants because it provides insight on the effectiveness of videoconferencing as a medium for the English teacher and lecturer in assessing students' speaking performance. The study revealed that students experience various feelings such as nervousness, anxiety, and shyness, but also relaxation. The researcher also identified three kinds of challenges faced by the students' during the application of videoconferencing such as bad signal connection, technical problems, and surrounding disturbance. The researcher concluded videoconferencing should be reappraised to assess students' speaking ability to determine if it can be an alternative or a drawback.

3. Methodology

The methodology section includes research design, sample and population, research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This is a descriptive case study to investigate English program students' perception of online speaking assessment. Descriptive case studies provide insights into complex issues and describe natural phenomena within the context of the data that are being questioned (Yin, 2013; Zainal, 2007). The design is appropriate for this study, as the researchers were seeking to gain a description of students' perception towards online speaking assessment. A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using a Likert-type questionnaire and semi-structured interview on students' satisfaction, confidence, and use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessment. It was administered to students from the Department of English at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

3.2 Sample and Population

A total of 70 respondents were used from two English bachelor study programs at UPM. The study involved 45 English Language and Linguistics students enrolled in BBI3213 *Speech Communication* and 25 English Literature students enrolled in KOH3333 *Communication for Change*. All 70 respondents were UPM third-year English Language students aged 20 to 26. Table 1 summarizes the sample of this study.

Table 1. Sample of Respondents

Courses	BBI3213 *Speech Communication*	KOH3333 *Communication for Change*
Bachelor Study Program	Bachelor of Arts English Language and Linguistics with Honors	Bachelor of English Literature with Honors
Number of students	45	25

3.3 Description of Online Speaking Assessment

The study examines how students from these two bachelor programs perceived online speaking assessment in their courses. Assessments were carried out on different online platforms including Google Meet, Zoom, Webex and Microsoft Teams. Two types of online speaking assessment were experienced by the students: synchronously through live speeches on videoconference and asynchronously through video recorded speeches. Live speeches on videoconference requires students to present on a given topic via a videoconferencing tool. Each presentation lasted for about 10 minutes, followed by a question-and-answer session with the lecturer and course mates. This format focused on students' ability to articulate thoughts coherently and respond spontaneously. While video recorded speeches required students to record themselves delivering a speech on topics relevant to the course content. These recordings were typically limited to a specific time frame, such as 5-7 minutes, to assess their ability to concisely convey information and ideas. The recorded speeches were played and graded during class time. Both types of assessments were evaluated on several criteria: fluency, pronunciation, relevance of content, and overall engagement, with a standardized rubric to ensure fairness and consistency in grading.

3.4 Research Instruments

The study was based on a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the English program students. A questionnaire was administered on all students in the *Speech Communication* and *Communication for Change* courses who participated in the online speaking assessment. In addition, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to support the findings of the questionnaire.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

An online questionnaire using Google Form to capture students' perception about online speaking assessment was distributed to 70 respondents of third year undergraduate English students from both courses. The link of the questionnaire was shared using an invitation poster through the respective classes' WhatsApp Instant Messenger group chats.

The study used a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire instrument to collect data. The questionnaire was divided into five sections. Section A was designed to gather demographic information about the respondents such as gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, bachelor program, course of study and means of access. Section B finds out students' perception in terms of satisfaction of online speaking assessment and Section C focuses on students' perception with regard to confidence of online speaking assessment. Section D aimed at the perception of students on the use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessment. Each section had eight items. While the last section, Section E had an open-ended question about students' general perception about online speaking assessment. Refer to Appendix A for the questionnaire.

Table 2. Questionnaire Adaptation

Sections	Questionnaire adapted from
Section B: Students' perception in terms of satisfaction of online speaking assessment	Mishu et al. (2022)
Section C: Students' perception in terms of confidence of online speaking assessment	
Section D: Students' perception on the use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessment	Dermo (2009)

Table 2 shows the sources used for the design of the questionnaire of the current study. The instruments adapted for the design of the questionnaire of the current study are survey questionnaires developed by Mishu et al. (2022) and Dermo (2009). Questions from Mishu et al (2022) were adapted into the current questionnaire for sections B and C. However, as Mishu et al.'s (2022) study focused on how online presentations affect students' anxiety rather than the elements of the online application itself, the researchers used Dermo (2009) to gather data about students' perception on the use of technology in order to complete the questionnaire for the current study.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Interview

In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were held with some of the students who had opinions on the online speaking assessment. Seven students participated in the interview and expressed their thoughts on the speaking assessment. There were ten interview questions about students' perception towards online speaking assessment in terms of satisfaction, confidence, and use of technology (refer to Appendix B for the interview questions). To address all three of the research questions, the ten interview questions were adapted from three distinct studies by Mishu et al. (2022), Korkmaz (2022) and Nova (2020).

3.5 Sampling

An invitation message for the questionnaire was created and sent through the respective classes' WhatsApp Instant Messenger chat groups. All BBI3213 *Speech Communication* and KOH3333 *Communication for Change* students were invited to participate in the study because they had experience with the online speaking assessments. The invitation was posted three times until a maximum of 70 students were recruited. In addition, a list of students from both classes was received from the relevant lecturers for the interview. 10% of the 70 students, totaling seven, were randomly selected and interviews were conducted at the

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication.

3.6 Procedures for Data Collection

A digital questionnaire on students' perception of online speaking assessment was constructed using Google Form. The link of the questionnaire was shared with the students from both courses to collect their responses. Students were informed that the survey would take about five minutes to complete. The data was collected within two weeks to make sure that the process proceeded smoothly. After collecting the questionnaire data, the researchers needed to prepare and organize the data for descriptive analysis. Next, the interview guidelines and objectives were clearly explained to the seven selected students before the interview session. The interviews were carried out in a quiet space away from any noise or interruptions. The students were interviewed separately so that different responses could be obtained. The interview was conducted based on the 10 semi-structured interview questions. The interviews were conducted in English and each interview session took 10-15 minutes per student.

3.7 Procedures for Data Analysis

The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert-type scale. It included several items relating to online speaking assessment based on the students' perception in terms of confidence, satisfaction and use of technology. After the questionnaire was collected, the data was considered as ordinal data and it was imported into the JASP software from Excel. The number of frequency counts was converted into a percentage. Next, Microsoft Excel was used to draw the graph for each question of the survey. The 24 items were shown using tables. Then, the tables were interpreted according to the three research questions. Interview data obtained through semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded. The collected data were then consolidated in a file and analyzed. Interviews with students were constructed to cross-check the findings obtained from the questionnaire.

4. Results

This section discusses the results of the study. The results were divided into three sections based on the research questions: the perception of students towards online speaking assessment in terms of satisfaction, perception of students towards online speaking assessment in terms of confidence and perception on the use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessment.

4.1 Respondents' Demography

The research was carried out on students of the Department of English at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM. There were 70 respondents involved in this research. Table 3 below reveals the demographics and background of the respondents.

Table 3. The Respondents' Demography (N=70)

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	59	84.3
Male	11	15.7
Age		
20	1	1.4
21	10	14.3
22	18	25.7
23	22	31.4
24	11	15.7
25	6	8.6
26	2	2.9
Ethnicity		
Malay	40	57.1
Chinese	23	32.9
Indians	2	2.9
Others	5	7.1
Nationality		
Malaysian	50	71.4
Non - Malaysian	20	28.6
Course		
English Language	45	64.3
English Literature	25	35.7
Means to access		
Laptop	50	71.5
Mobile Phone	18	25.7
Tablet	1	1.4
Desktop Computer	1	1.4

Table 3 illustrates that a different number of males and females participated in this study. Out of 70 respondents, only 11 (15.7%) are male, while the remaining 59 (84.3%) are female. 72.8% of respondents fall within the age range of 20–23 years old, and 27.2% fall within the age group of 24-26 years of age.

Based on the table above, the third-year students that participated in the survey included 50 Malaysians (71.4%) and 20 non-Malaysians (28.6%). Out of the 70 respondents, 50 (57.1%) are Malays and 23 (32.9%) are Chinese. There were 2 (2.9%) Indian respondents and 5 (7.1%) of other ethnicities, including Indonesian, Iranian, and Sino-native. The majority of respondents are Malays.

As stated in the methodology, 45 English Language and 25 English Literature students participated in this survey. Among the 70 respondents, 68 students (97.2%) used laptops and mobile phones to access the online speaking assessment. The remaining 2 students (2.8%) used a tablet and a desktop computer.

4.2 Perception of Students on Online Speaking Assessment in Terms of Satisfaction

To address the first research question, what are the perception of students about online speaking assessment in terms of satisfaction, eight statements were used in the questionnaire. In this section, the researchers present four of the most significant statements.

Table 4. Item number 2

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel more comfortable and flexible behind the computer screen at home when I perform an online presentation.	5 (7.1%)	9 (12.9%)	15 (21.4%)	19 (27.1%)	22 (31.5%)

Table 4 shows how students feel when taking the online speaking assessment at home. According to Table 4, 58.6% of English students feel more comfortable and flexible behind the screen when performing an online speaking presentation at home. Some students stated that online speaking assessments require a peaceful environment, which they may obtain in their own room. Besides that, 20% of students said they did not feel comfortable taking the online assessment behind a screen. It is because students could not see whether others were paying attention to their presentation or not since all students had closed their cameras. 21.4% of students have a neutral stance on it because they feel comfortable in both online and physical speaking assessments.

Table 5. Item number 3

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can concentrate on pronouncing words or phrases correctly when I perform an online presentation.	4 (5.7%)	9 (12.9%)	17 (24.3%)	19 (27.1%)	21 (30.0%)

According to Table 5, 57.1% of students feel more focused and able to concentrate on online speaking assessments. They felt there was no distraction in online settings like door opening sounds or movement of people as occurred in a physical classroom. It makes them concentrate more on pronouncing words or phrases when delivering presentations. 18.6% of students felt it was hard to focus and concentrate on online speaking assessments as a result of the complete silence of their classmates throughout their online presentation. 24.3% of students have a neutral stance, as some students can easily adapt to the situation as they can concentrate in both noisy and quiet environments.

Table 6. Item number 7

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that the evaluation and grading systems for assessing online speaking skills are fair and reliable.	2 (2.9%)	7 (10.0%)	31 (44.3%)	19 (27.1%)	11 (15.7%)

Based on Table 6, 42.8% of students felt that evaluation and assessment in online speaking assessments were fair and reliable. It is because they found the marking rubric very detailed, clear and strict. However, 12.9% of students felt that online speaking skills were not fair and reliable. They were of the opinion that there are numerous ways to cheat online that lecturers may find challenging to detect, including exploiting the presence of prompters. The difficulty for lecturers in detecting students' online cheating can lead to lecturers assigning identical marks to both honest and dishonest students. 44.3% of students had a neutral opinion about the reliability and fairness of online speaking assessments. The students felt online assessments were reliable but not necessarily fair because students who put in a lot of effort to prepare for speaking got the same marks as those who put in less effort.

Table 7. Item number 8

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel very satisfied with the way online speaking assessments are executed.	4 (5.7%)	4 (5.7%)	23 (32.9%)	21 (30.0%)	18 (25.7%)

Table 7 shows the majority (55.7%) of students were satisfied with the way the online speaking exams were executed. The students were satisfied in terms of their performance and grading system. However, 11.4% of students were not satisfied with it because they feel that online speaking assessments are boring and non-interactive. 32.9% of students were unsure about it. They felt it was satisfying in terms of convenience, but when it comes to technical issues, it makes them unsatisfied.

4.3 Perception of Students on Online Speaking Assessment in Terms of Confidence

Next, to address the second research question, what are the perception of students on online speaking assessment in terms of confidence, eight statements were used in the questionnaire. The four most significant statements are as follows:

Table 8. Item number 9

Statement	Degree of Agreement			
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The success of an online presentation increases my self-confidence and reduces my anxiety.	8 (11.4%)	16 (22.9%)	26 (37.1%)	20 (28.6%)

Table 8 shows that 65.7% of students felt that the success of an online presentation increased their self-confidence and reduced their anxiety. Gradually, they felt more confident over time as they got accustomed to it. Students believe that online presentations make them less nervous because they are in their comfort zone. 11.4% of students felt online presentations did not increase their self-confidence since they felt more confident when they got to see their audiences' facial expressions. They noted that they can know if their presentation has succeeded by observing the reactions of the audience, whether they are happy or confused. 22.9% of students have a neutral stance on it because they felt online presentations did not reduce their anxiety but did boost their confidence level. Students lacking the confidence to speak in front of a large crowd could choose to hide other participants on the screen, a practice that enhances their self-assurance.

Table 9. Item number 11

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Online presentations help me control my stress because I do not see the reactions on the faces of the lecturers or fellow students.	4 (5.7%)	7 (10.0%)	14 (20.0%)	25 (35.7%)	20 (28.6%)

Table 9 shows that 64.3% of students felt online presentations helped them control their stress because they could not observe the reactions of their lecturers or classmates. Students who are suffering from speech anxiety can control their fear by looking only at the camera rather than the face of the audience on an online platform. 15.7% of students felt that they needed to observe audience reactions to control their stress. By looking at people, the students get to know how people react to their presentation, which makes them happy and relieves stress. 20% of students have a neutral stance on it. When the students get too nervous, they want to avoid looking at their audience, but at some points they need to see their audience to make their presentation more authentic.

Table 10. Item number 14

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I usually suffer from stress and anxiety, but online presentations have helped me to overcome them.	6 (8.6%)	21 (30.0%)	18 (25.7%)	16 (22.8%)	9 (12.9%)

According to Table 10, 35.7% of students felt that online presentations helped them overcome stress and anxiety. Online presentations help students overcome their fear of public speaking as they do not worry as much in terms of how people react to their presentation. However, 38.6% of students felt online presentations caused them more stress and anxiety due to technical issues. If students' PowerPoint presentation slides or microphone do not work, students are stressed as they feel it would affect their marks; but in the physical classroom, students are still in the same room with the lecturer and the shared physical presence allows the presentation to proceed despite the glitches. 25.7% of students were unsure about it. Students felt it depends on the situation; sometimes an online presentation makes them relax and sometimes it triggers tension and anxiety due to bad internet connection.

Table 11. Item number 16

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I easily get nervous while taking the online speaking assessment, which makes my voice shaky.	10 (14.3%)	26 (37.1%)	17 (24.3%)	9 (12.9%)	8 (11.4%)

Based on Table 11, it shows that 51.4% of students felt that they did not easily get nervous while taking the online speaking assessment. Students felt calm and relaxed during the presentation due to the convenience of the online platform. The students also practise relaxation strategies, like taking deep breaths, stretching, walking, and having some snacks or drinks, to avoid getting nervous. 24.3% of students find that their voice is shaky because of nervousness during presentations. It is because they are unable to see their audiences most of the time, as everyone closes their cameras when presentations are on. 24.3% of students were unsure because of the potential of internet lagging during presentation, which made them very nervous because the lecturer would not be able to hear clearly and students will have to repeat. If they have a strong internet connection, they note they will not get nervous easily.

4.4 Perception of Students on the Use of Technology in the Execution of Online Speaking Assessment

Lastly, to address the third research question, what are the perception of students on the use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessment, eight statements were used in the questionnaire. The four most significant statements are discussed below.

Table 12. Item number 19

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am forced to learn how to operate the computer because my computer knowledge is limited.	13 (18.6%)	12 (17.1%)	18 (25.7%)	22 (31.5%)	5 (7.1%)

Table 12 shows that 38.6% of students felt that they were forced to learn how to operate a computer because their computer knowledge was limited. A sudden change from physical to online presentation due to the COVID-19 pandemic made it hard for students to adapt to the changes. Some students learnt on their own slowly, and some asked for help from their siblings to learn how to operate videoconferencing apps like Google Meet, Zoom, Skype, and Webex. 35.7% of students felt they were not forced to learn because some of them were

computer literate and were very familiar with it. 25.7% of students had a neutral stance on it. Although they had some knowledge of computers beforehand, they still had to learn new things, like using Google Doc and Canva.

Table 13. Item number 21

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The use of technology aided me in editing the video of my online presentation.	2 (2.9%)	2 (2.9%)	12 (17.1%)	26 (37.1%)	28 (40.0%)

Table 13 highlights 77.1% of students felt the use of technology aided them in editing the video of their online presentation. Students used a lot of software like Inshot, Capcut, and Filmora to edit their video presentations. The use of technology helped not only in editing but in preparing a script as well. The students felt the use of technology was really beneficial for them in preparing their presentation. 5.8% of students felt the use of technology did not help them. They felt the use of technology limited their creativity because students used the free video editing template rather than creating their own. 17.1% of students felt unsure about video editing because they felt it would increase their workload and be time-consuming; nevertheless, in order to have good quality videos, they felt they must learn to use it.

Table 14 Item number 23

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is easier to cheat on online speaking assessments than with face -to-face assessments.	3 (4.3%)	3 (4.3%)	17 (24.3%)	21 (30.0%)	26 (37.1%)

Table 14 shows that 67.1% of students felt it was easier to cheat in online speaking assessments compared to face-to-face assessments. Students felt that some of them would misuse the technology when presenting online. Some used a promoter while presenting, which made them appear to be able to present normally when in actual fact they were reading from their notes. There are also students who used ChatGPT to prepare the script with creative ideas and bombastic vocabulary for their presentations. All of these were forms of plagiarism. 8.6% of students were of the view that it is hard to cheat on online speaking assessments because they felt that lecturers can differentiate between a presenter who looks at notes and one who does not. In other words, they were of the opinion that lecturers can detect

cheating. 24.3% of students are unsure about cheating because they felt that referring to a script during presentations was allowed, and that lecturers can differentiate between students who are reading from notes and those who are presenting authentically.

Table 15. Item number 24

Statement	Degree of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Technical issues raise my nervousness and add stress during speaking.	2 (2.9%)	4 (5.7%)	13 (18.5%)	21 (30.0%)	30 (42.9%)

Table 15 shows 72.9% of students felt technical issues raised their nervousness and added stress during speaking. Students felt technical issues made their presentation ineffective. Although students prepared well for the presentation, the audience was unable to receive the information the way they intended due to technical issues. It causes students to become stressed. 8.6% of students felt that technical issues did not raise their nervousness because they felt technical problems while presenting were usually preventable. 18.5% of students have a neutral stance on this. They felt giving speeches always made them anxious and tense, and technical issues are unpredictable.

4.5 Discussion

In dealing with the perception of students in terms of satisfaction, the present study revealed both positive and neutral perceptions towards online speaking assessment. The majority of students claimed that they were relaxed and felt more comfortable performing speaking assessments on online platforms. This finding aligns with the findings of Shofatunnisa et al. (2021), where a majority of students were satisfied with the online speaking assessment as they found it flexible and did not put pressure on them. The reason for this may be that online assessments can be done anytime and anywhere, according to the convenience of the student. The current study also found that online speaking assessment helps students to be calm and able to speak fluently during presentations. Students stated, "I felt less nervous because I do not see the audiences in real life." This finding is in line with a similar finding by Köroğlu (2021) who found that students are able to express their ideas openly and clearly in online speaking assessments which is not possible in traditional speaking assessments due to stress and pressure. On the other hand, the current study also showed that students felt neutral about whether the grading systems of online assessment were fair and reliable. Even though some students felt the online exam was unfair because students who prepared well and those who cheated received similar marks, the majority of them stated that "the lecturer can detect whether you are reading or speaking because they are experienced". This is in line with a similar observation made by Noor Behbahani et al. (2022) that teachers can identify whether or not their students are speaking spontaneously, and grade them fairly. In addition, during

the interview session, a student also mentioned that "the marking rubric and evaluation form for online speaking assessment were more detailed and stricter when compared to face-to-face assessment". It indicates that online speaking assessments are reliable, an observation also made by Afacan Adanır et al. (2020). According to Galaczi (2010) the convenience and standardization of delivery of online speaking assessments enhance their reliability and practicality. Generally, the current study showed that students had a positive perception towards the online speaking assessment in terms of satisfaction.

Next, the results of the current study indicated both positive and negative perception of students towards online speaking assessment in terms of confidence. The majority of students have a high level of confidence when performing online speaking assessment. Students felt they were able to perform well in online assessments compared to face-to-face assessments, especially students who were shy. It was admitted by an introverted student of the current study who said that "I am able to talk well online and manage to get good marks compared to physical assessment." This is a similar finding made by Fry (2020) who found that online presentations allow introverts to share their ideas with everyone without feeling nervous. Astuti (2021) also found that students are more confident during online speaking assessments because of the absence of eye contact with lecturers and audience, so they do not feel intimidated. The current study also found that presenting from behind the screen made students more relaxed and confident as they could speak more fluently and comfortably, which were findings also reported by Korkmaz (2022) and Tsang (2020). As a student stated in the interviews of the current study, "I have noticed my hand does not shake when I present online because usually when I hold the mic, my hand shakes in a physical presentation."

In contrast, the current study also found that some students felt that online assessment did not help them overcome stress and anxiety. A student mentioned that "I feel anxious even if I am well-prepared to speak." According to Nova (2020) speaking anxiety is common among students, and it might rise even during online assessments because online speaking assessments are still new for students. Speaking anxiety is something that we cannot completely get rid of from students (Altun, 2023; Taly & Paramasivam, 2020; Diao & Paramasivam, 2013; Liu, 2006) and it may not even be beneficial to do so as some amount of anxiety is needed for effective performance. Looking at online assessment from a positive perspective, the current study shows that online speaking helps students enhance their communication skills by increasing their confidence level. Therefore, it can be said that the benefit of the online mode of speaking assessment in terms of enhancing student confidence is good.

Viewing the perception of students on the use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessments, the majority of students perceived the online mode negatively. A few noteworthy disadvantages were highlighted by students such as bad signal connection, technical problems, and cheating as a form of academic dishonesty. In line with obstacles faced during the online speaking assessment, the findings of the current study align with past studies. Consistent with Fitriani et al. (2020), bad internet connection is the biggest difficulty faced by most students. Poor internet connection causes the lecturer and audience to be unable to hear while students are speaking. This makes students nervous and start to worry

about their assessment results. Some students revealed that "the fluctuation of the internet connection is unpredictable, and it makes me more nervous during the presentation." In addition, limited connections to the internet make it hard for students to speak online, especially those from rural areas. It resulted in low-quality sound and videos received by the lecturers, a similar finding also observed by Archibald et al. (2019).

Next, technical problems were also experienced by the students when speaking which resulted in frustrations when having to deal with the problems. Difficulties in handling the computer when speaking like not knowing how to share screen and how to control the volume and audio during presentations, made students feel hard. Some students stated, "I felt very nervous when the lecturer said they did not see my slides", "the screen is black", while another student stated, "I had already turned on my mic, but the audience is unable to hear me during the presentation". These findings are similar to the studies of Nova (2020), Fitriani et al. (2020), and Korkmaz (2020). The students also stated that it is easier to cheat in online speaking assessments, as some students looked at the pieces of paper affixed to the side of the screen and read from there and that the lecturers cannot see what students do behind the screen, whether they speak or read. These findings are similar to findings made by Forrester (2020) and Akimov and Malin (2020). Although students felt that online assessment may reduce the purity of students' speaking skills, they nevertheless indicated their positive perception of the use of technology, in the sense that technology aided them in editing their video presentations. Students mentioned that "I used Canva a lot to edit my presentation slides, which made my work easier and my slides more presentable." It helps students get additional marks for creativity and content arrangement, along with their speaking skills from lecturers. Although technology is viewed as useful by students for their presentations, the many challenges they face with the use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessment, results in them having a negative perception of it.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study with regard to the perception of students about online speaking assessment is enlightening. The findings show that students' perception of online speaking assessment is positive with regard to satisfaction and confidence but negative with regard to technology use. In terms of satisfaction, students perceive online speaking assessment as giving them comfort, helping them feel relaxed and concentrate better during presentations, which they feel enable them to communicate and express their ideas better. In terms of confidence, they do not feel insecure and feel confident speaking on online platforms. However, with regard to the use of technology in online speaking assessment, students face challenges mainly poor internet connections and technical problems which result in a negative perception of online speaking assessment, which they perceive as resulting in them feeling anxious and panic. The findings have implications for Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis in second language learning; when students experience positive emotions, the affective filter is reduced, and they can express information and ideas well, on the other hand, when students become anxious, the affective filter is raised, and students speaking abilities become lower. The findings are significant for helping educators and institutions improve the online delivery of speaking assessment so as to facilitate students having positive

emotions of the mode so that online methods of assessment may help sustain the future of online education.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic

In this session, respondents must fill up the following personal details accordingly.

1. Gender: Male ( )   Female (   )

2. Age: 19 ( )   20 ( )   21 ( )   22 ( )   23 ( )   24 ( )   25 ( )   26 ( )

3. Ethnicity: Malay ( )   Chinese ( )   Indian ( )   Others:_____

4. Nationality: Malaysian ( ) Non-Malaysian ( )

5. Course: English Language & Linguistics ( )   English Literature ( )

6. What is your means of access to online speaking assessment? Please specify:

Desktop computer ( )   Laptop ( )   Mobile phone   Tablet ( )
Others: _____

Instruction: Please use the following scale to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

Section B: Perception of students on online assessments in terms of satisfaction

No	Items	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
1	The feeling of being assessed by the lecturer distracts me when performing online presentations.					
2	I feel more comfortable and flexible behind the computer screen at home when I perform an online presentation.					
3	I can concentrate					

	on pronouncing words or phrases correctly when I perform an online presentation.	
4	Online speaking assessments are more convenient than face-to-face speaking assessments.	
5	Online presentations decrease my fear of forgetting some parts of the presentation.	
6	The direct eye contact with audiences while performing online presentations, which makes me speak more fluently.	
7	I feel that the evaluation and grading systems for assessing online speaking skills are fair and reliable.	
8	I feel very satisfied with the way online speaking assessments are executed.	

Section C: Perception of students on online assessments in terms of confidence

No	Items	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
9	The success of an online presentation increases my self-confidence and reduces my anxiety.					
10	I prefer online presentations because they make me feel less stressed and anxious than when I give a presentation in the classroom.					
11	Online presentations help me control my stress because I do not see the reactions on the faces of the lecturers or fellow students.					
12	I feel less stressed when I perform an online presentation because I do not have to worry about my gestures or body language.					
13	I feel a pounding heart, a dry mouth, a stomachache, or sweating hands while giving an online presentation.					

14	I usually suffer from stress and anxiety, but online presentations have helped me to overcome them.					
15	Online speaking assessment makes me feel less nervous while using the English Language.					
16	I easily get nervous while taking the online speaking assessment, which makes my voice shaky.					

Section D: Perception of students on the use of technology in the execution of online speaking assessments

No	Items	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
17	My experience with online presentations encourages me to perform more online presentations.					
18	Technical problems make online speaking assessment impractical.					
19	I am forced to learn how to operate the computer because					

	my computer knowledge is limited.
20	I have to worry about technical problems even though I'm well-prepared for the speaking presentation.
21	The use of technology aided me in editing the video of my online presentation.
22	Face-to-face speaking assessments are fairer than online speaking assessments.
23	It is easier to cheat on online speaking assessments than with face-to-face assessments.
24	Technical issues raise my nervousness and add stress during speaking.

Section E: Other comments on online speaking assessments

Do you have any other comments to make about online speaking assessments?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What are your views on online speaking assessment in general?

2. Do you think the evaluation and grading system for assessing online speaking assessments is fair and reliable? Why? Give reasons for your answer.

3. Do you feel more comfortable and flexible behind the computer screen at home? Why? Give reasons for your answer.

4. Do you feel satisfied with your performance after the online speaking assessments? Why? Give reasons for your answer.

5. What kind of feelings have you experienced when performing online speaking assessments? Please elaborate.

6. Does your self-confidence affect your performance during online speaking assessments? Please elaborate.

7. Do you think the success of online presentations enhances your self-confidence and reduces your anxiety? Please give reasons for your answer.

8. How does it feel to have videoconferencing as a medium for online speaking assessment?

9. What kind of obstacles did you face during your online speaking assessments?

10. What is your perception of the online mode in assessing speaking skills?

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