

The Interplay Between Emotional Intelligence, Oral Communication Skills and Second Language Speaking Anxiety: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at identifying the association between Goleman's emotional intelligence and second language speaking anxiety by employing oral communication skills as the mediating variable. A correlational research design was used. A total of 209 first and second-year Malaysian undergraduate ESL students were selected from one public university in Malaysia. The study employed the proportionate stratified random sampling. In order to collect data, three questionnaires including 'Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI)', 'Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)', and 'Oral Communication Skills Scale' were used. Testing the hypotheses required correlational analysis done via Smart PLS 3.0. Results provided support for the proposed conceptual framework, disclosing that emotional intelligence was significantly associated with oral communication skills. Also, oral communication skills were significantly associated with second language speaking anxiety. Lastly, oral communication skills mediated the association between emotional intelligence and second language speaking anxiety. The current study offered ESL students, educator and policymakers several theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; second language speaking anxiety; oral communication skills; structural equation modeling; Malaysian ESL students

INTRODUCTION

Language learning in the academic setting is believed to vary based on mastering language skills which are prone to deteriorate due to several psychological factors, particularly, second language anxiety (Cheng, 2017; Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau, & Dewaele, 2016; Horwitz, 2016; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Hwang, Hsu, Lai, & Hsueh, 2017; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1988; Teimouri, Goetze, & Plonsky, 2019; Young, 1991, 1992). Regrettably, language anxiety is believed to cause academic failure in English as second language (ESL) countries, including Malaysia (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019). More precisely, speaking skill is the dominant source of language anxiety among the other three skills i.e., reading, writing and listening (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1988; Cheng, 2017). In Malaysia, the majority of Malaysian undergraduates "have a serious lacking in speaking English and this situation has raised an alarming concern in securing employment in the future" (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019, p. 1). Similarly, in the context of Malaysia, researchers revealed that Malaysian students encounter serious learning hurdles due to language anxiety (Azarfam & Baki, 2012; Hamzah, 2007; Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013).

Research indicates that students speak confidently if they practice a sufficient amount of oral skills through oral interactions in their classrooms (Lee, 2016; Melchor-Couto, 2017; Villalba & Luz, 2017). It has been established in 'social cognitive theory' (SCT) that an individual's environment relatively affects their own behaviour which play a significant role in their achievements or failures (Bandura 1986). Oral communication skills are significantly

and negatively associated with foreign language anxiety level (Amengual-Pizarro, 2018). In fact, a major “key educational concern in Malaysia is the pupils’ limited communicative skills in English” (Meganathan, Yap, Paramasivam, & Jalaluddin, 2019, p., 55). In terms of oral communication skills, second language speaking anxiety needs attention in Malaysia. In the context of Malaysia, only few researchers have conducted studies to investigate the relationship between certain kinds of language anxiety (i.e., reading language anxiety, writing language anxiety, listening language anxiety) and different kinds of achievements (i.e., academic achievement, language achievement) (Daud, Daud, & Kassim, 2016; Dewaele, Witney, Saito, & Dewaele, 2018; Guvenc et al., 2016; Khawaja, Chan, & Stein, 2017; Marwan, 2016; Rajab, Zakaria, Rahman, Hosni, & Hassani, 2012; Serraj & Noordin, 2013; Thompson & Khawaja, 2016). However, there is a severe dearth of studies related to ‘second language speaking anxiety’.

Furthermore, the SCT by Bandura (1986) affirmed that person’s traits and cognitive abilities (e.g., emotional intelligence) reciprocally affect, and get affected by, environment and behaviour (refer to Figure 1). Emotional intelligence (EI), based on its originator Daniel Goleman consists of five constructs. While the first construct, i.e., self-awareness, refers to awareness of emotions intrapersonally and self-confidence, the second, self-regulation implies emotional self-control, adaptability and eagerness (Giorgi & Majer, 2009). The next construct, i.e., motivation, is defined as “an inner source, desire, emotion, reason, need, impulse or purpose that moves a person to a particular action” (Chalak & Kassaian, 2010). Motivation is seen as the primary variable that affects language learning (Cohen & Dornyei, 2002; Ilter, 2009; Tsao, Tseng, & Wang, 2017). Empathy, the fourth construct, entails organisational awareness and service orientation (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Giorgi, 2013; Giorgi & Majer, 2009). The last construct is social skills which encompass the power of collaboration and teamwork (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000; Boyatzis & Saatcioglu, 2008). These five modelled constructs of EI as a set of acquired competencies are responsible for developing behaviour and performance (Goleman, 1998). In the previous literature, researchers found relationships between EI and various academic variables including academic achievement, mathematics, management, English language achievement, and French language achievement (Festus, 2012; McCleskey, 2014; Colomeischi & Colomeischi, 2015; Musonda, 2017; Tariq, Qualter, Roberts, Appleby, & Barnes, 2013; Yeigh et al., 2016). However, there is scarcity of research related to the relationship between EI and second language speaking anxiety. For that reason, this study aimed to establish the role of ‘EI’ in ‘second language speaking anxiety’ by using ‘oral communication skills’ as a mediating variable. The next section presents the research objectives of the current study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research intends to attain the following objectives:

- 1- To examine the relationship between Malaysian undergraduate ESL students’ EI level and their oral communication skills
- 2- To examine the relationship between Malaysian undergraduate ESL students’ oral communication skills and their second language speaking anxiety
- 3- To determine the mediating role of oral communication skills between EI and second language speaking anxiety among Malaysian undergraduate ESL students

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The conceptual framework of the current study is shown below in Figure 1. As evident from Figure 1, this study consisted of one independent variable, i.e., EI. Moreover, ‘oral communication skills’ acted as a mediating variable. Lastly, ‘second language speaking anxiety’ was the dependent variable.

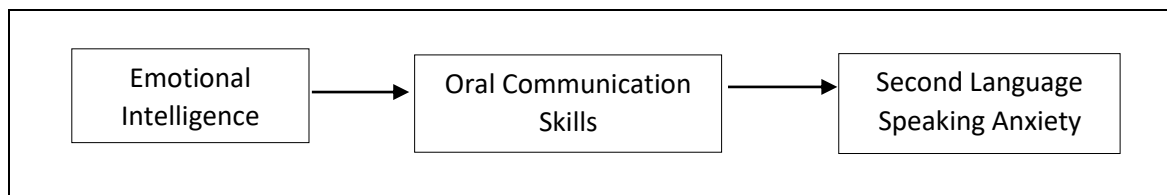


FIGURE 1. Conceptual Framework

As already explained in the previous section, there is no direct association between EI and second language speaking anxiety in the past literature. However, after reviewing the literature, it was established that there was a substantial association between EI and oral communication skills (Engelberg & Sjöberg, 2005; Chang & Hu, 2017; Marzuki, Mustaffa, & Saad, 2015; Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, & Hollander, 2002; Suhaimi, Marzuki & Mustaffa, 2014) and also between oral communication skills and second language speaking anxiety (Ahmed, Pathan, & Khan, 2017; Akbar, Sofyan, & Damayanti, 2018; Alias, Sidhu & Fook, 2013; AY, 2010; Çağatay, 2015; Debreli & Demirkan, 2015; Doğan & Tuncer, 2016; El-Sakka, 2016; Gaibani & Elmenfi, 2016; Haskin, Smith & Racine, 2003; Lee, 2016; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Price, 1991; Razak, Yassin, & Maasum, 2017; Soomro et al., 2019; Young, 1991, 1992). According to Preacher, Rucker and Hayes (2007), mediation (M) takes place when the causal effect of an independent variable (X) on a dependent variable (Y) is transferred by a mediating variable (M). In simpler terms, if M is influenced by X and Y is influenced by M, then in turn, Y is influenced by X. Thus, oral communication skills were employed as a mediator between EI and second language speaking anxiety. In addition, based on our observation in the literature, oral communication skills were hardly used as a mediating variable between EI and second language speaking anxiety. Thus, oral communication skills was used as a mediator in the current study.

In light of the above-mentioned studies and identified theoretical gaps in the present research, the theoretical framework was created. The theoretical framework is illustrated in Figure 2 below. This study employs Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Bandura (1986, 1997) as the theoretical framework upon which the variables are correlated. SCT is widely known for its focus on reciprocity of three aspects, i.e., personal trait, environmental stimuli and behaviour (Bandura, 2001; Herz, Schunk & Zehnder, 2014). Bandura (1986, 2001) demonstrates this reciprocity as ‘reciprocal determinism’. Generally, the three aspects of SCT are responsible to cover the three variables of the present study. That is to say, the first aspect, personal trait, pertains to several cognitive abilities like EI (Bandura, 1986). In addition, personal traits directly include components of EI such as stress management and self-regulation. Secondly, environment and its stimuli refer to all personal and interpersonal interactions (Bandura, 2001; Herz et al., 2014; Shehzad, Lashari, Alghorbany, & Lashari, 2019) within an environment such as oral communication skills. Oral communication skills and their construct of motivation are components of the environment (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Hamat, & Hassan, 2019). Lastly, behaviour, the third aspect of SCT, covers anxiety as it is a ‘negative behaviour’ (Gardner, 1994). Thus, the model of triadic reciprocity proposed in this study explains the correlational

nature of the research variables (i.e., EI, oral communication skills, and second language speaking anxiety).

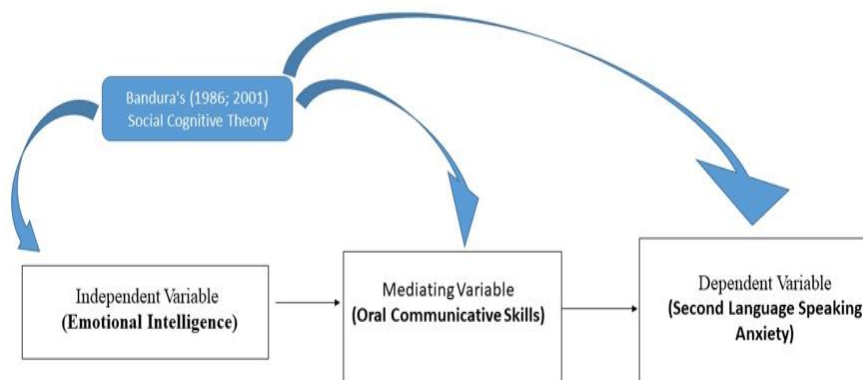


FIGURE 2. Theoretical Framework

LITERATURE REVIEW

EI AND ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The previous studies determined the connection between EI and oral communication skills in various fields. For instance, several researchers determined the relationship between two variables in the academic fields of business, English language and science (Afshar, & Rahimi, 2014; 2016; Chang & Hu, 2017; Ebrahimi, Khoshshima, Zare-Behtash, & Heydarnejad, 2018; Fall, Kelly, MacDonald, Primm, & Holmes, 2013; Schutte et al., 2002). All of these studies revealed a substantial connection between EI and oral communication skills. Additionally, few researchers conducted studies regarding the association between these two variables in the professional settings of management and health care (Batoool, 2013; Erigüç & Köse, 2013; Lee & Gu, 2013). All of the aforementioned studies concluded that there exists a significant connection between EI and oral communication skills. Interestingly, researchers found that both EI and oral communication skills significantly improved the effectiveness of disaster management in Malaysia (Suhaimi et al., 2014). Another recent study concluded that EI is significantly associated with communication competence and also moderates the correlation between communication competence and self-efficacy (Chang & Hu, 2017).

Based on the review of the above studies, it is worth mentioning that the majority of the studies focused on the academic setting in universities. Also, Chang and Hu (2017) suggested for future researchers that research ought to be conducted to find other associations between the two variables. We considered the recommendations given by the above-mentioned researchers and consequently examined the connection between EI and oral communication skills.

The current section has reviewed the studies related to EI with various academic variables. The next section reviews the studies regarding the association between oral communication skills and second language speaking anxiety.

ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND SECOND LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY

Several studies were conducted to examine the interplay between communication skills and second language anxiety. Alias et al. (2013) revealed that communication skills are connected

to the construct of foreign language classroom anxiety, i.e., ‘communication apprehension’. However, the majority of the researchers employed qualitative designs using interviews to investigate such phenomena (Afshar & Rahimi, 2014; Alias et al., 2013; Azarfam & Baki, 2012; Ohata, 2005; Pappamihel, 2002; Soomro et al., 2019; Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013).

Notably, the researchers who examined the association between communication skills and second language speaking anxiety differ in the nature of the sample of their studies. A few researchers chose primary school students as their samples (Alshahrani & Alandal, 2015; Nijat, Atifnigar, Chandran, Selvan, & Subramonie, 2019). Moreover, several studies were conducted on high-school students (Khoshshima, Sarani, & Ganji, 2018; Liu & Chen, 2015; Maisarah, 2019; Mukminin, Masbirorotni, Noprival, Sutarno, Arif, & Maimunah, 2015; Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015; Santos, Gorter, & Cenoz, 2017). Lastly, various studies were conducted in university settings (Ahmed, Pathan, & Khan, 2017; Akbar, Sofyan, & Damayanti, 2018; Çağatay, 2015; Debreli & Demirkan, 2015; Doğan & Tuncer, 2016; El-Sakka, 2016; Gaibani & Elmenfi, 2016; Razak, Yassin, & Maasum, 2017). All of the previous studies found a significant association between oral communication skills and second language speaking anxiety. For instance, Ahmed et al. (2017) investigated the factor that led to second language speaking anxiety among 240 postgraduate students in a Pakistani university. The study was quantitative in nature using SPSS to analyse the data. The results of their study showed that the students feel anxious to speak to others in a classroom due to the lack of communication skills. Similarly, a study was conducted by Akbar et al. (2018) on the causes of foreign language speaking anxiety among 79 third-semester students in Indonesia; they reported that the students were mildly anxious to talk to each other in English due to a lack of communication skills. Another study by Çağatay (2015) examined EFL university students’ foreign language speaking anxiety in Turkey. After collecting the data via questionnaires from 147 Turkish students at the English preparatory programme, findings showed significant associations among foreign language speaking anxiety, oral communicative skills, and gender.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative research design was used in the present study due to its nature and objectives. Furthermore, in accordance with the research objectives, a correlational research design was implemented.

SAMPLING

A population is a group of entities that have same attributes that differentiate them from other groups (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, the population of the present study was male and female Malaysian undergraduate ESL students studying in a public university, i.e., Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). The university of UUM has three colleges, i.e., College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), College of Business (COB) and College of Law, Government and International Studies (COLGIS). In order to collect the data from the students of the aforementioned three colleges, a proportionate stratified random sampling was employed. Furthermore, a certain proportion of sample was selected from each of the three colleges (stratas) based on their respective population. For instance, the sample proportion of ‘COB’ was the highest due to the reason that it had the highest population as compared to the other colleges (refer to Table 1).

TABLE 1. *Proportion of Quantitative Sample*

No.	Name of College	Population	Percentage	Sample (students)
1	College of Business	9117	57%	119
2	College of Law, Government and International Studies	3472	22%	46
3	College of Arts and Sciences	3376	21%	44
	TOTAL	15965	100%	209

Regarding sample size, the present study followed the table of sampling presented by Bartlett, Kotrlik and Higgins (2001). The sampling table indicates that, for the population above 10000 subjects, the appropriate sample is 209. Thus, the sample of the current study was 209 Malaysian undergraduate ESL students.

INSTRUMENTS

In order to test the relationship among EI, oral communication skills and second language speaking anxiety, three self-administered questionnaires were used. Firstly, ‘Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI)’ was adapted from Goleman (1998) for measuring the independent variable, i.e., EI. It consists of 40 items that tackle the five dimensions of EI (i.e., self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skill). More particularly, self-awareness was assessed by five items, self-regulation was measured by nine items, motivation was assessed by seven items, empathy was assessed with nine items, and social skill was assessed with ten items.

Secondly, with the aim of collecting data regarding oral communication skills, a scale adapted from Morreale, Spitzberg and Barge (2007) was employed. It originally was a four-point scale but it was adapted to a five-point Likert scale (‘1’ refers to minimal competence whereas ‘5’ refers to high competence) to match with the other two questionnaires and for statistical purposes. Also, the scale contained 21 items. However, one item was omitted due to its inappropriateness to the Malaysian culture (i.e., Item 5: Discussing safe sex with someone you are considering sexual relations with). This instrument was found rigorous in measuring the level of students’ communication skills (Chang & Hu, 2017; Marzuki et al., 2015).

Lastly, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was distributed in order to gather data regarding second language speaking anxiety (i.e., dependent variable). FLCAS was adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986). The aforementioned scale contains 33 items and employs a five-point Likert scale with a textual response format ranging from ‘Strongly agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Not sure’, ‘Disagree’, to ‘Strongly disagree’. Although the scale is titled ‘Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale’, there are three main reasons that justify adapting it in the Malaysian ESL context. Firstly, the authors of FLCAS stated that their model and scale seek to investigate issues “concerning anxiety and second language achievement” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 126). Also, in their model, they use the words L2 and FL interchangeably which makes it clear that this scale is meant for both ESL and EFL contexts. Thirdly, many studies have used FLCAS in ESL contexts (e.g., Aida, 1994) and especially in Malaysia (e.g., Al-Saqqaf, 2015; Lian & Budin, 2014; Heng, Abdullah, & Yusof, 2012). Therefore, FLCAS fits well in the ESL Malaysian context.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES AND RESULTS

The two-phase method (i.e., ‘structural model assessment’ and ‘measurement model assessment’) by Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2009) was seen to best present PLS-SEM

results (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). The two phases' components are listed by Hameed et al. (2018) as illustrated in Figure 2.

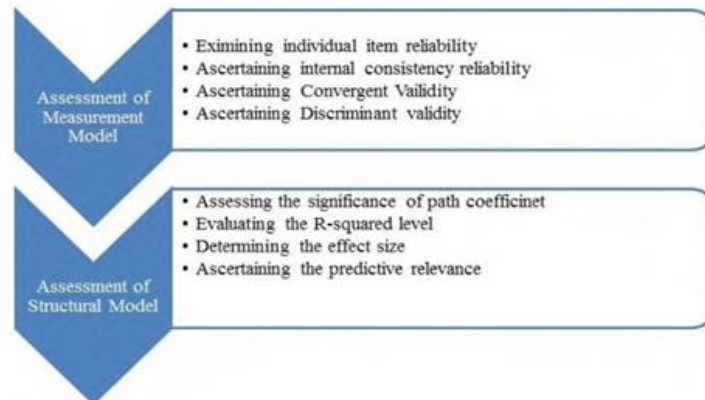


FIGURE 2. Two-Step PLS-SEM (Hameed et al, 2018)

MEASUREMENT MODEL

The measurement model assessment necessitates scrutinising various entities including Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), factor loadings, discriminant validity, and average variance extracted (AVE). The outcomes of this model are shown in Figure 3 and Table 2. Also, the factor loadings of all variables are shown in Figure 3. It is worth mentioning that the value of factor loadings must be higher than 0.5 for the sake of establishing convergent validity (Hair Black, Babin, Andersen, & Tatham, 2010). All factor loading values of the present study's variables are fulfilled. More precisely, the values range from 0.50 to 0.90. Thus, convergent validity is established.

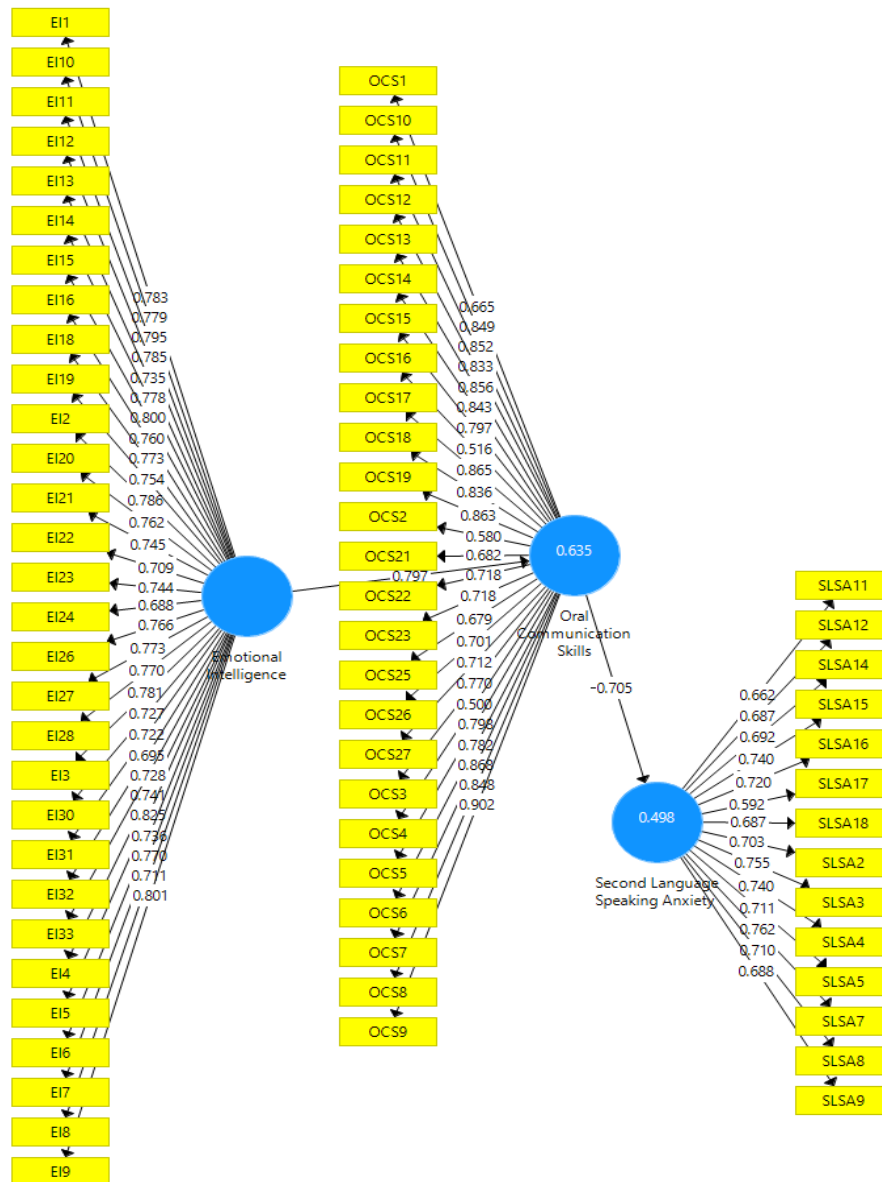


FIGURE 3. Confirmatory factor analysis

This study's values of Cronbach's alpha, CR, and AVE are listed in Table 1. Concerning the norm of Cronbach's alpha value, it must be higher than 0.7 (George & Mallery, 2016). The Cronbach's alpha value of the present study ranges from 0.927 to 0.974. In addition, concerning CR standard, it must be (≥ 0.7) and the value of AVE must be (≥ 0.5) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In the present study, the norms of CR and AVE are attained (refer to Table 2). Moreover, discriminant validity is attained via Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method (refer to Table 2).

TABLE 2. Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability and AVE

	Cronbach's		Composite	Average
	Alpha	rho_A	Reliability (CR)	Variance Extracted (AVE)
Emotional Intelligence	0.974	0.975	0.976	0.575
Oral Communication Skills	0.970	0.973	0.973	0.592
Second Language Speaking Anxiety	0.927	0.941	0.932	0.5

STRUCTURAL MODEL

The structural model was assessed for the sake of determining the influence of EI on oral communication skills and second language speaking anxiety. Also, for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses, t-values and path coefficient values were calculated.

TABLE 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Emotional Intelligence	Oral Communication Skills
Emotional Intelligence		
Oral Communication Skills	0.809	
Second Language Speaking Anxiety	0.598	0.658

Furthermore, effect size (f^2) and R-Square (R^2) were determined through employing the structural model. The t-values of all the three hypotheses were greater than 1.96, therefore, all the three hypotheses were accepted. In other words, EI was significantly correlated with second language speaking anxiety. Additionally, the effect size (f^2) is demonstrated in Table 6. According to Cohen (1988), the effect size value of (0.2) is considered small, (0.5) represents a 'medium' effect size, and (≥ 0.8) is a 'large' effect size. In the current study, EI has a medium effect size and second language speaking anxiety has a large one (refer to Table 6).

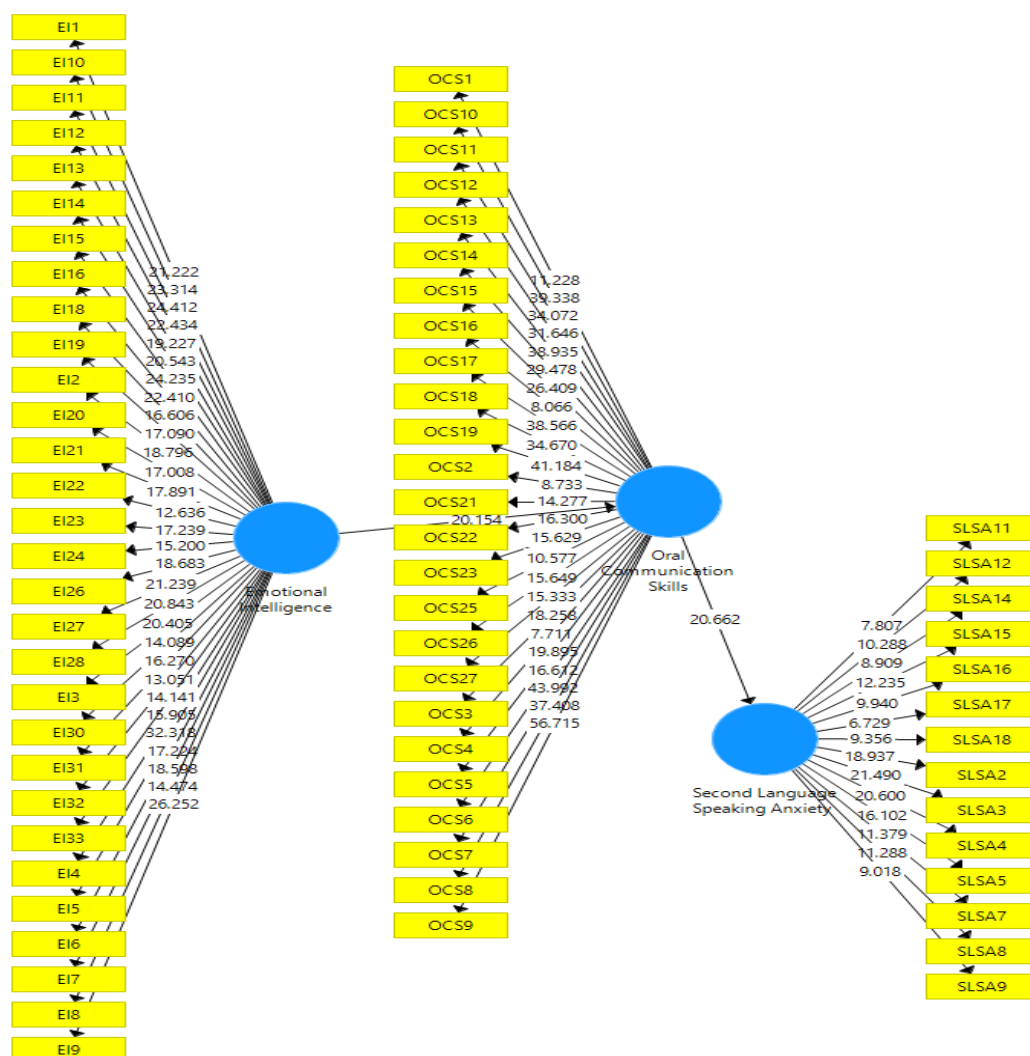


FIGURE 4. Structural model assessment

TABLE 4. *Structural model assessment (Direct relationship)*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Emotional Intelligence -> Oral Communication Skills	0.797	0.799	0.04	20.154	0
Oral Communication Skills -> Second Language Speaking Anxiety	-0.705	-0.715	0.034	20.662	0

TABLE 5. *Structural model assessment (Indirect relationship)*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Emotional Intelligence -> Oral Communication Skills -> Second Language Speaking Anxiety	0.562	0.572	0.046	12.128	0.000

TABLE 6. *Effect Size (f^2)*

	Oral Communication Skills	Second Language Speaking Anxiety
Emotional Intelligence	0.741	
Oral Communication Skills		0.99

The R^2 values are shown in Table 7. They indicate that EI impacted oral communication skills by 63%, and foreign language speaking anxiety by 50%.

TABLE 7. *R-Square (R^2) Value*

	R Square
Oral Communication Skills	0.635
Second Language Speaking Anxiety	0.499

DISCUSSION

The finding of the first research objective indicated that EI was significantly and positively associated with oral communication skills. The present study's findings are in tandem with the SCT which affirms that personal cognitive trait, which is EI in this study, is reciprocally associated with environmental abilities, which are oral communication skills in this study. More precisely, EI has a significant positive relationship with oral communication skills showing a t-value of 20.15 and β -value of 0.797. In other words, this result elucidated that the Malaysian ESL students' oral communication skills were affected by their level of EI positively. Thus, the first objective of the present study was completely achieved at this stage by examining the relationship between EI and oral communication skills. This finding is in line with many studies (Afshar, & Rahimi, 2014; 2016; Batool, 2013; Ebrahimi et al., 2018; Erigüç & Köse, 2013; Fall et al., 2013; Lee & Gu, 2013; Schutte et al., 2002). A study by Chang and Hu (2017). which supports the present study's findings, found significant positive associations between oral communication skills and EI among 272 elementary school directors in Taiwan. Like the present study, their study is quantitative in nature which gives this study a solid support. Another interesting study that supports the present study was Suhaimi et al. (2014)

who proposed a framework linking significantly EI and interpersonal communication skills in the Malaysian context.

Furthermore, OCSs were significantly but negatively correlated with SLSA (t -value= 20.662; β value= -0.705). This result entails that when the level of second language speaking anxiety was high, their level of oral communication skills was low and vice versa. Thus, the second objective of the present study was fully attained at this stage by examining the relationship between oral communication skills and second language speaking anxiety. Numerous studies supported this outcome (Afshar & Rahimi, 2014; Ahmed et al., 2017; Akbar et al., 2018; Alias et al., 2013; Alshahrani & Alandal, 2015; Azarfam & Baki, 2012; Çağatay, 2015; Debreli & Demirkan, 2015; Doğan & Tuncer, 2016; El-Sakka, 2016; Gaibani & Elmenfi, 2016; Khoshshima et al., 2018; Liu & Chen, 2015; Maisarah, 2019; Mukminin et al., 2015; Nijat et al., 2019; Ohata, 2005; Pappamihel, 2002; Razak et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2017; Tercan & Dikilitaş, 2015; Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013). In accordance with the present study's findings, Soomro et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study on oral communication and second language anxiety among eight participants in Pakistan. The results showed strong association between the variables. In other words, their study indicated that second language anxiety is primarily caused by the deficiency of oral communication skills.

Lastly, the results of the third research objective indicated that 'oral communication skills' successfully mediated the association between 'EI' and 'second language speaking anxiety'. This finding is supported by SCT (Bandura, 1986). According to the aforementioned theory, environmental abilities are affected and generated from personal cognitive traits (i.e., EI) which in turn affect the performance and behaviour of individuals (i.e., second language speaking anxiety) (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Oral communication skills were proven to successfully mediate psychological and social variables (Carroll, Hill, Yorgason, Larson, & Sandberg, 2013). Therefore, the third objective of the present study was achieved by determining the mediating role of oral communication skills between EI and second language speaking anxiety.

IMPLICATIONS

This section provides several theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, in the current study, the association of 'EI' with 'second language speaking anxiety' was investigated via the mediation of oral communication skills. Previous studies indicated that 'EI' is a significant predictor of various academic variables including academic achievement, mathematics, management, English language achievement, and French language achievement (Festus, 2012; McCleskey, 2014; Colomeischi & Colomeischi, 2015; Musonda, 2017; Tariq et al., 2013; Yeigh et al., 2016). However, there was a shortage of studies regarding the relationship between 'EI' and 'second language speaking anxiety'. The current study indicated that EI is a significant predictor of second language speaking anxiety among Malaysian ESL students. These findings could be beneficial for ESL teachers and students. ESL teachers can raise the awareness of EI in their students in order to decrease their speaking anxiety. Moreover, this study contributed to SCT. SCT has been used in numerous research fields. However, more specifically, in ESL, the current research is first of its nature which employed SCT to examine the connection between 'EI' and 'second language speaking anxiety'. Thus, the current study has helped to enlarge the scope of SCT.

Secondly, rigorous literature review indicated that 'EI' was correlated with several kinds of language skills (Chang & Hu, 2017; Kahraman, 2013; Marzuki et al., 2015; Schutte et al., 2002; Shao et al., 2013; Soomro et al., 2019; Suhaimi et al., 2014). However, limited research was conducted on the relationship between 'EI' and 'oral communication skills'. Also,

Chang and Hu (2017) suggested that research ought to be conducted to find other associations between the two variables. Thus, the current study examined the roles of ‘EI’ in ‘oral communication skills’ for the sake of filling this gap in the body of literature. Findings of the current study disclosed that EI was substantially associated with ‘oral communication skills’. These findings could be potentially beneficial for ESL teachers. Oral communication skills are environmental abilities which influence the performance of the learners (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Thus, ESL teachers can inculcate EI among their students in order to enhance their oral communication skills.

LIMITATIONS

The current study was quantitative in nature. It is recommended that there should be a study conducted via a qualitative or mixed-methods design to deeply understand all perspectives of the investigated phenomena. More particularly, future researchers ought to conduct interviews to explore the factors responsible for the relationship between the current study’s variables.

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