

Performance Self-Appraisal Calibration of ESL Students on a Proficiency Reading Test

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ABSTRACT

Self-assessment as a placement measure or accurate assessment of skill has been scrutinized in previous research. Findings have shown a general human tendency towards overconfidence in performance (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). This study looks at performance selfappraisals in an ESL population, with participants from varying cultural backgrounds. Performance self-appraisal calibration is a measure of the relationship between an examinee's perceived skill (or confidence) and their actual skill (or ability) on a given exam item (Phakiti, 2016). Being well-calibrated is an indication that test takers know their strengths and weaknesses and thus the difference between confidence and ability is minimal, whereas poorly calibrated examinees may be oblivious to their weaknesses. While some research has explored selfappraisal calibration in first language (Hassmén & Hunt, 1994; Gutierrez & Schraw, 2015; Stankov & Lee, 2014) and foreign language contexts (Bastola, 2016; Phakiti, 2016), the language research has been limited to the performance of native language speakers on normreferenced tests.

It still needs to be determined how test takers would perform on a criterion-referenced exam with items of differing difficulty parameters administered to examinees from different language backgrounds. To that end, a proficiency-based criterion-referenced reading comprehension test was administered to 96 ESL students with 8 different language backgrounds. To measure confidence, a pre- and post-test questionnaire was administered in addition to a confidence slider bar that was embedded into each test item. We investigated correlations between cultural background and item difficulty on the students' self-appraisal calibrations. Our results showed that ESL students were overconfident in their self-calibrations, and their overconfidence was more pronounced as item difficulty increased. There were significant differences based on native language background. Implications will be discussed.

Keywords: self-assessment, self-appraisal calibration, assessment, confidence, reading comprehension, cultural differences