

A Qualitative Analysis of How Pre-Recorded Presentations Affect Communication Competence Dimensions in Malaysian ESL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Pre-recorded video presentations are increasingly used in the ESL classroom, yet their differential effects on specific communication competence dimensions remain underexplored. Grounded in Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) communication competence model, this qualitative study examined how pre-recorded speech assessment impacts three communication competence dimensions: knowledge (content organisation and clarity), skills (verbal and non-verbal delivery), and motivation (confidence and engagement) among fifty-three Malaysian ESL university students. Data were collected via an open-ended online questionnaire and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Four themes emerged from the students' reflections, namely (1) Reflective Learning and Self-Awareness, (2) Psychological Impacts, (3) Technical and Environmental Barriers and (4) Skill Development.

The findings indicated that these themes influenced the communication competence dimensions in different ways. Reflective Learning enhances knowledge and non-verbal delivery through self-observation and evaluation. Psychological impacts improved confidence through repeated practice but constrained verbal delivery due to camera anxiety. Technical and environmental barriers limited audience engagement, particularly through noise, recording conditions and video quality issues. Skill awareness motivated improvement across all dimensions by making students aware of specific problems. Overall, the findings reveal that the impact of pre-recorded assessments is dimension-specific rather than uniform. Rather than benefiting communication competence as a whole, pre-recorded assessments may strengthen certain dimensions while creating challenges in others. These findings provide Malaysian ESL educators with evidence-based insights for designing and implementing video-based speaking assessments aligned with specific communication learning outcomes.

Keywords: ESL learners, communication competence, pre-recorded speeches, video-based assessment, informative speeches

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Oral presentation plays an important role in the educational context as it prepares students for the communication demands of the workplace. Students are expected to possess effective communication skills and demonstrate the ability to present in a variety of settings. Given the changing nature of communication in the modern workplace, the ability to participate in both online and face-to-face presentations has become

increasingly important for their professional careers. Therefore, it is crucial for students to develop oral communication competence across multiple settings and modes of delivery. In response to these changing demands, various universities and academic programmes have begun to incorporate live online and pre-recorded presentations as part of oral assessment. These different modes of oral presentations provide opportunities to simulate real-world communication scenarios, thereby supporting the development of oral competence and fluency in the target language (Hallemans & Copeland, 2025). The authors noted that incorporating both types of presentations in the assignments would enhance students' functional English proficiency across various contexts.

Among these assessment modes, pre-recorded assessment particularly benefits students in improving their oral presentation skills as they are able to monitor their delivery skills. Acala (2025) reported that pre-recorded assessment improved learners' awareness of their presentation skills and enabled them to identify areas requiring further improvement. The chance to review and self-assess their recorded presentations is significant for reflecting on and improving their oral presentation skills.

This can also be seen in Ngadiran et al (2024) who found that students' oral presentation performance improved significantly, particularly in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and overall organisation of their presentations. Overall, pre-recorded assessment enhances students' motivation in language learning and helps develop job-related competence (Nguyen, 2025). The use of this medium can foster greater learner autonomy, as students are encouraged to take greater responsibility for managing and directing their own learning. Therefore, it is crucial to understand students' perceptions of their experiences with pre-recorded assessments and how these influence their communication competence.

Even though pre-recorded assessments offer a wide range of benefits for learners particularly in language acquisition and skill development, these benefits are not consistently reported across studies. While Ngadiran et al. (2024) found improvements in oral presentation performance, Norfarhana Fadilla Mohd Zaki and Sharifah Nadia Syed Nasharudin (2025) reported difficulties with fluency and delivery skills in pre-recorded informative speech assessments. Face-to-face oral presentation may contribute to communication apprehension among students (Ibrahim, 2024) while pre-recorded assessments present different challenges.

Students have been reported to experience pressure and concerns regarding feedback from their peers (Anmary & Mohammed, 2022). In addition, Nguyen (2025) identified poor internet connectivity and limited video-making skills as technical barriers that students encountered when completing pre-recorded presentation tasks. Hallemans (2021) also noted that students recording from home may have encountered difficulties with the technology available to them, resulting in the need for re-recording.

These findings suggest that students may experience pre-recorded oral assessments differently depending on the assessment format and that their performance may vary across different dimensions of communication competence. However, limited research has examined how these benefits and challenges relate to specific dimensions of communication competence among Malaysian ESL university students. Therefore, this qualitative study addresses this gap by investigating how Malaysian ESL university students experience pre-recorded video assessment and how these experiences influence different dimensions of communication competence. Using the Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) communication framework, the study was driven by the following research question:

- (i) How do the benefits and challenges of pre-recorded speech assessment impact the development of specific communication competence dimensions among Malaysian ESL students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) Communication Competence Model

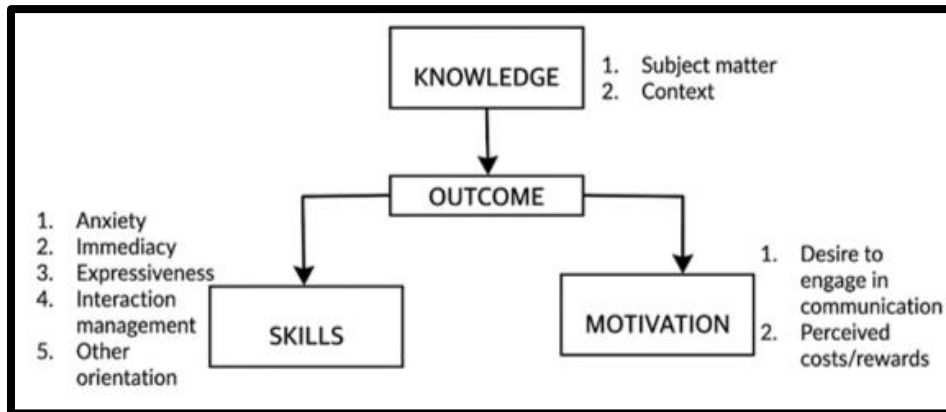


Figure 1: The Communication Competence Model (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984)

Communication competence encompasses the complex ability to communicate effectively and appropriately within specific social and cultural contexts. While many scholars have contributed to defining competence, Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) framework provides a useful model for understanding the nature of competent communication and is particularly essential for ESL learners' academic success. As illustrated in Figure 1, this model conceptualises communication competence through the interaction of three dimensions: knowledge, skills, and motivation. In this framework, knowledge consists of an understanding of the content and context of communication. Skills refer to verbal and non-verbal delivery, including vocal clarity, pace, fluency, body language, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and postures. Meanwhile, motivation refers to the ability to connect with listeners, maintain their interest and have self-assurance in communicating and managing communication anxiety.

Pre-Recorded Assessments in ESL Education

In higher education, students cannot avoid being assessed on their speaking skills in an ESL classroom. This assessment is usually meant to see whether students can fulfil the task given with fluency and proficiency or not. Conventional face-to-face oral assessment can create several challenges for ESL students, particularly anxiety, performance pressure, and difficulty demonstrating their actual speaking competence under stressful conditions. Ibrahim (2024) explains that oral presentation assessment is a major method used to measure students' speaking ability in Malaysian educational settings, but its face-to-face nature may contribute to communication apprehension. Students may experience tension and nervousness when preparing for and anticipating a presentation, while some may also experience confused thoughts, difficulty concentrating, and anxiety when responding to questions or making mistakes during the presentation. The study further found that students reported feeling anxious about upcoming presentations and that some perceived anxiety as affecting their presentation performance (Ibrahim, 2024).

Numerous studies have highlighted the pedagogical potential of pre-recorded video presentations in enhancing the academic performance and oral communication skills of ESL learners in Malaysia. Anmary and Mohammed (2022) argue that conventional face-to-face oral presentations can be challenging for students as they are required to communicate their knowledge directly to an audience while facing pressure and concerns about receiving feedback from peers. In contrast, pre-recorded video presentations provide students with opportunities to record, review, and re-record their presentations, enabling them to evaluate their performance before submission. This potential is supported by multiple studies on video-based assessment, which have demonstrated positive effects on the development of students' speaking skills.

Panadero (2016) found that concrete, specific feedback supports competence development better than vague feedback, suggesting that the self-observation enabled by video recording provides valuable feedback mechanisms for learners. This suggests that reviewing one's own recorded performance may function as a valuable source of feedback.

Additionally, through self-observation learners can evaluate their own video recordings, recognise speaking mistakes and eventually improve their understanding of content knowledge (Tukan, 2024). Tailab and Marsh (2020) emphasised that students who evaluate their video-recorded presentations can develop greater awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Beyond encouraging self-evaluation and improvement, pre-recorded assessments may also contribute to students' confidence and autonomy. Unlike live presentations, pre-recorded assessments allow students to practise repeatedly in a less intimidating environment which can reduce anxiety and build confidence (Indriani, 2020; Ngadiran et al., 2024). Such flexibility provides learners with greater control over the recording and presentation which increases students' enjoyment and satisfaction (Yusof et al., 2025).

However, despite these benefits, pre-recorded assessments also present psychological and practical challenges for students. Camera anxiety has been identified as a specific challenge in video assessments even though the camera offers a less pressured environment than a live audience (Alumalai & Paramasivam, 2023; Kho & Ting, 2023). Students may also be concerned that the use of excessive editing tools could compromise the authenticity of their performance and eventually affect their grades (Wijaya et al., 2024). Other than psychological challenges, practical challenges were also reported in the available literature. Technical issues such as poor recording quality and microphone failures can create additional difficulties and further increase students' anxiety (Alumalai & Paramasivam, 2023; Tukan, 2024).

Most importantly, these challenges and benefits of pre-recorded assessment may not extend equally to all aspects of communication competence. A study done by Norfarhana Fadilla Mohd Zaki and Sharifah Nadia Syed Nasharudin (2025) examined the communication competence demonstrated by Malaysian university students through pre-recorded informative speech presentations. The findings showed that students demonstrated satisfactory competence in organising content, managing presentation time, and maintaining grammatical accuracy; however, weaknesses were identified in delivery, particularly limited eye contact, inadequate vocal projection, and reliance on notes. The study also found that although the pre-recorded format provided flexibility and supported technical aspects such as time management, it did not automatically result in effective speech delivery or increased confidence.

Malaysian ESL Context

Research on ESL learning in Malaysian higher education contexts reveals specific characteristics that may shape learners' experiences of pre-recorded assessment. Malaysia's multilingual environment and the role of English as a second language in higher education create unique learning conditions for the development of students' communication competence. Studies conducted in Malaysian higher education settings reported both benefits and challenges related to oral and video-based assessments. For instance, opportunities to review and reflect on recorded performances have been associated with greater awareness of communication performance and increased confidence among learners (Kho & Ting, 2023, 2024; Ngadiran et al., 2024). These chances may provide learners with greater control over their preparation and performance, potentially creating a less intimidating environment than the usual live presentations.

Nevertheless, these advantages come with several challenges. Malaysian students have been reported to experience camera anxiety and to have concerns over technical difficulties which may create additional psychological pressure (Alumalai & Paramasivam, 2023). Another primary concern is that pre-recorded assessments may compromise the development of spontaneity and authentic, real-time communication skills among learners, causing them to miss the immediacy of live interaction and feedback (Yusof et al., 2025). This can hinder students' opportunities for spontaneous communication and direct audience feedback. Furthermore, over-reliance on editing while potentially improving the final performance, may still raise concerns about the authenticity of students' communication skills (Yusof et al., 2025).

Collectively, it can be seen that existing studies provide both benefits and disadvantages of pre-recorded assessments for Malaysian ESL learners, but demonstrate limited understanding of how these experiences relate to the specific dimensions of communication competence. Advantages like the chance for repeated practice, self-reflection, and reduced pressure may facilitate certain aspects of communication competence but put constraints on others due to challenges such as camera anxiety, recording and technical difficulties, as well as limited real-time interaction. More importantly, these effects may not operate uniformly across the three dimensions of communication: knowledge, skill, and motivation. Therefore, examining how learners perceive the benefits and disadvantages of pre-recorded assessment with regard to these dimensions may provide an extensive understanding of its role in developing communication competence among Malaysian ESL learners.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative exploratory design using thematic analysis to investigate how pre-recorded assessments affect communication competence dimensions. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was selected as the analytical approach because it systematically identifies patterns in students' experiences and relates these patterns to specific communication competence dimensions.

Research Sample

Fifty-three undergraduate ESL students enrolled in LCC400 (English for Informative Speech) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia, participated in this study. LCC400 is a required course for ESL students focusing on developing skills in informative speech and presentation. All students were first-language Malay speakers, studying English as a second language. The course included a pre-recorded video speech assessment task as part of the grading requirements. Students prepared a 5-7 minute informative speech on a topic of their choice, recorded themselves delivering the speech, reviewed their recording, and submitted the video as an assessment deliverable. Students were required to complete a consent form before submitting their video recording. This is to ensure that they agreed to be part of this study, and they were informed that involvement was completely voluntary, allowing participants to withdraw at any stage without incurring any negative consequences.

Data Collection

Following the assessment task, students were asked to complete an anonymous online reflection form via Google Forms. The form contained four open-ended questions:

- (i) What benefits did you experience from recording your speech on video?
- (ii) What did you learn from watching your own recording?
- (iii) What challenges or barriers did you face when recording your informative speech?
- (iv) What would you recommend to improve the use of video recording for teaching communication skills in future courses?

Fifty-three students submitted responses. Two responses were incomplete (missing student IDs S18 and S29), yielding 51 valid responses for analysis. The responses were anonymised and stored securely. Participation was voluntary and did not affect their course grades.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, which provides a

systematic approach to identifying patterns in qualitative data.

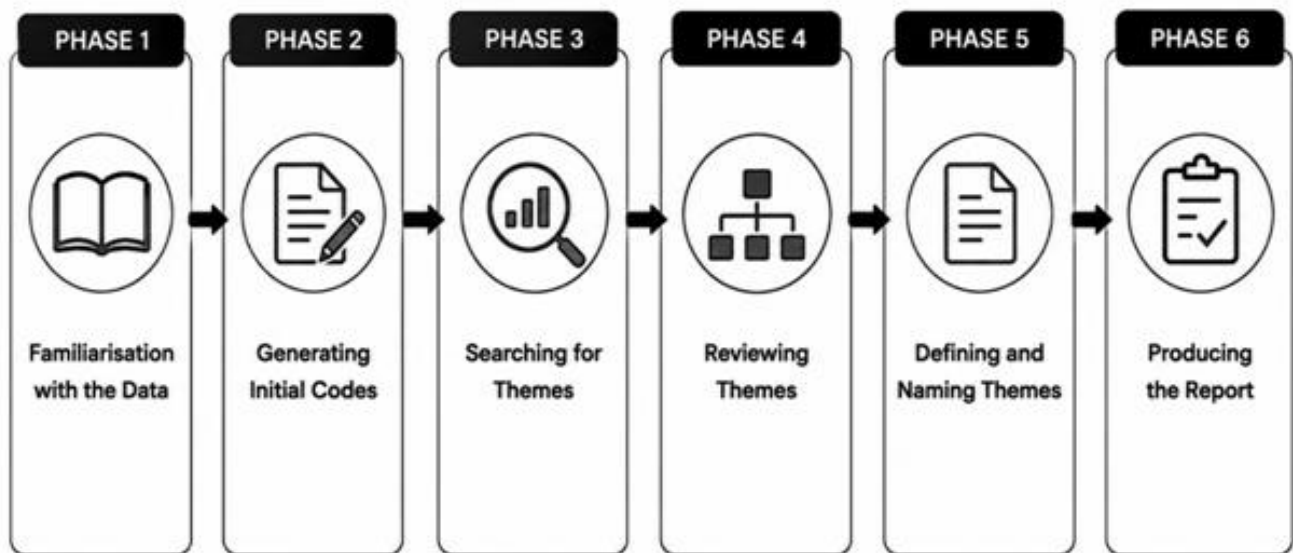


Figure 2: Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Framework

Phase 1- Familiarisation: All fifty-one responses were read multiple times by the researchers to develop comprehensive familiarity with the dataset. During this phase, reading was done without attempting to categorise the data.

Phase 2- Initial Coding: Coding was conducted at the semantic level, where the researchers focused on the explicit meaning of the students' expressions rather than making their own interpretation. Meaningful segments of texts were identified and assigned descriptive codes. The coding process was performed by the researchers independently. The researchers executed the coding phase separately, subsequently addressing and reconciling any divergent interpretations to attain mutual agreement.

Phase 3- Theme Development: Initial codes were examined and categorised into broader themes reflecting common patterns across multiple responses. Similar codes were grouped into one theme.

Phase 4- Theme Review: The identified themes were reviewed for consistency purposes. Themes were checked against the entire dataset to ensure all relevant data were included and the distinction between themes was clear.

Phase 5- Theme Naming and Definition: Each theme was formally defined with a clear term and description of what it encompassed. Where appropriate, subthemes were also identified. For example, 'Psychological Impacts' contained two distinct subthemes, which are 'camera anxiety' and 'confidence building'.

Phase 6- Dimension Analysis and Reporting: All themes were examined for their effects on the three main dimensions of communication competence. When analysing students' responses, the researchers identified which dimension(s) each theme addresses.

Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) Communication Competence Model provided the theoretical framework guiding data analysis. This framework's three dimensions (knowledge, skills and motivation) enabled systematic analysis of how these themes affected different aspects of competence. When analysing students' reflections about their experience, each statement was examined for which dimension it addressed. This framework-guided approach ensured findings were closely related to theoretically grounded competence rather than remaining at a general level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings in relation to the research question stated earlier. Analysis of the 51 student responses identified four overarching themes describing how students experienced pre-recorded assessment and the communication competence dimensions they perceived as developing or facing constraints. Because a single student response could contain evidence relating to more than one theme or subtheme, the themes were not mutually exclusive. Therefore, the frequency and percentage reported for each theme represent the number of students whose responses contained evidence associated with that theme, rather than mutually exclusive categories. Percentages were calculated using the total number of student responses ($N = 51$) as the denominator. Table 1 provides an overview of the themes, their prevalence, and the communication competence dimensions associated with each theme.

Table 1: Themes, Prevalence and Dimensional Impacts

Theme/ Subtheme	Students coded (n)	Prevalence %	Dimension affected
Reflective Learning and Self-Awareness	48	94.1 %	Knowledge; Non-verbal
Psychological Impacts - Anxiety - Confidence building	23 28	45.1 % 54.9 %	Verbal Confidence
Technical and Environmental Barriers	29	56.9%	Audience engagement
Skill Development and Awareness	51	100%	Multiple dimensions

The following section will explore each theme in detail. The descriptions include (i) what students experienced, (ii) which communication competence it affected and (iii) the mechanism explaining why it affected the dimensions.

Theme 1: Reflective Learning and Self-Awareness

Reflective learning and self-awareness emerged as a significant benefit reported by 94.1% of the respondents. This theme reflects students' experiences of using video as a mirror for self-observation. By watching their recorded presentations, students were able to evaluate their own performance and identify both strengths and weaknesses of their speech presentation. As one student reflected: "Recording my speech helped me evaluate my presentation skills more clearly. I was able to observe my tone, body language, and confidence level" (S14). Other students reported noticing specific features of their spoken performance. For example, S41 stated, "I was able to spot areas that needed improvement, like speaking too fast, using filler words like "um," "uh" or having awkward pauses," while S43 explained "I was able to watch everything I said and identify my mistakes. This helped me improve my errors and train myself to pronounce words more correctly." These responses demonstrate how the visibility and replayability of recorded presentations enable students to identify specific aspects of their performance that might otherwise be difficult to notice during live presentations. Other than being able to identify specific performance features, repeated self-observation also encourages broader reflection on students' development as speakers. S11 for instance, reflected that "From watching my own recording, I realized that improvement take times. Watching myself was uncomfortable at first, but it helped me see that growth comes from being honest about my performance". This response shows that video observation creates an opportunity for students to critically evaluate their own performance and recognise areas for further development which is valuable in language learning.

Students' reflections indicated perceived development particularly in two dimensions of communication competence: knowledge and non-verbal delivery (skills). For knowledge, watching their own self-recordings enabled students to directly observe whether their content flowed logically and their ideas connected clearly. As stated by S14, "my content was well-organized and clear.", demonstrating how video observation of

content creates self-awareness. Students could assess whether their introduction, main points, and conclusion were logically connected. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that reviewing recorded presentations can facilitate the recognition of speaking difficulties (Tukan, 2025). The preparation of materials and presentation of ideas using their own strategies improved learners' comprehension skills (Indriani, 2019) indicating that the reflective observation process strengthens students' knowledge development. For non-verbal

delivery, as body language, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions are completely visible in video, students were able to identify their movements and provide detailed observations. S25 mentioned that "I can see my Body Language it allows for me to analysis of non-verbal sign, ensuring that facial expressions, posture, and gestures.". Another student similarly described "For me,during recording my speech i find out that i hardly to make eye contact which is i sometimes look away from camera and make some gesture like touching my finger and look at the wall randomly,from the recording i can improve my eye contact so that next time in real life presentation i can have a better aye contact" (S11). This detailed observation enables targeted improvement for the students. This corresponds with Indriani's (2019) observation that despite some challenges, students demonstrated effective speaking skills by expressing ideas effortlessly, smoothly, and at an appropriate pace, while delivering engaging presentations through appropriate gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions.

Both knowledge and non-verbal delivery involve observable and concrete aspects as video recordings capture the flow of the content as well as students' body language. These observable dimensions benefit most from reflective observation since students can repeatedly review their performance, and identify areas of improvement. This is consistent with Tailab and Marsh (2020) who found that video-based observation enables concrete self-assessment, with students who reviewed their video recordings developing greater awareness of their speaking strengths and weaknesses.

Theme 2: Psychological Impacts (Confidence and Anxiety)

Psychological Impacts emerged as a complex theme with multidirectional effects across competence dimensions. While approximately 45.1 % of Malaysian ESL students reported camera anxiety that constrained their delivery and motivation, 54.9 % experienced confidence building through repeated practice. These students perceived repeated practice as contributing to greater fluency and willingness to communicate.

Students reported nervousness specifically associated with being recorded. S14 for example, stated, "I felt nervous and self-conscious in front of the camera," while S42 explained, "I have to control my nervous and anxiety to make sure my video looks good and presentable." The anxiety resulted not from audience judgement but from the awareness of being permanently recorded and thinking that their imperfections would be captured forever. Similar discomfort expressed by S2 who reported feeling "A little bit gagap and kind of nervous plus scared", revealing the nature of camera anxiety. For some students, this anxiety was also reflected in difficulties maintaining natural delivery as mentioned by S9: "Too many fluttering in words and not confident to present in video." showing how camera anxiety affects fluency and confidence. Beyond camera-related anxiety, students also reported concerns about technical aspects of the recording process, especially when they perceived that technical errors could affect their grades and performance.

Conversely, the recording experience helped build students' confidence. Repeated practice appeared to be important in this process. As S35 explained, "Help me become confident because i could practice my speech many times so it helps me speak more clearly.". Other responses suggest that students gradually became more comfortable through the recording process. S11 reflected that, "From watching my own recording, I realized that improvement take times. Watching myself was uncomfortable at first, but it helped me see that growth comes from being honest about my performance.". S48 also mentioned that "I literally shy on camera but i still can manage it" proving that some students learned to manage their discomfort through repeated exposure and practice. These contrasting experiences on anxiety and confidence reveal that the same recording format created both psychological barriers and opportunities for students.

These psychological impacts were also reflected in students' communication performance. Camera anxiety, in particular, appeared to constrain aspects of verbal delivery. S14 recognised, "I learned that I tend to speak faster when I feel nervous." Similarly, S16 also noticed that "I noticed that I tended to speak too quickly when I was nervous. This made some parts unclear and harder to understand.". S22 further described that "The challenge i face was memorization script and natural delivery, in order to balancing preparation with sounding conversational is tricky and some moments may feel robotic from over memorizing, while others might drift off script.". These responses show that psychological pressure during recording may manifest in observable features of speech including pace, fluency, and naturalness of delivery. This finding is consistent with previous studies identifying camera anxiety and technical concerns as challenges associated with video-based assessment (Alumalai & Paramasivam, 2023; Kho & Ting, 2023; Wijaya et al., 2024). This type of anxiety created unique constraints on natural verbal delivery, particularly for recording situations. Overall, these findings suggest that although pre-recorded tasks can reduce some forms of speaking pressure, students may still experience psychological concerns related to technical problems, editing, and being on camera that may influence students' verbal performance.

At the same time, the flexibility of the pre-recorded format appeared to support students' confidence dimension. The low-pressure recording environment enabled multiple attempts without worrying about the consequences. Students showed confidence through the safe recording environment. This finding is consistent with Ngadiran et al. (2024) who found that pre-recorded assessment minimises nervousness and helps students cope with anxiety because it is less intimidating than a live presentation. Similarly, Indriani (2020) and Tukan (2024) revealed that video recording builds confidence by allowing them to practise repeatedly and evaluate their own performance. Greater autonomy and control over the recording process have also been associated with enjoyment and satisfaction (Yusof et al., 2025), while the absence of a live audience may reduce some of the pressures associated with managing verbal and non-verbal performance simultaneously (Alumalai & Paramasivam, 2023). In addition, Indriani (2024) also found that learners' autonomy in controlling vocabulary, facial expressions, and eye contact during recording fosters both creativity and confidence. Together, these studies support the present findings that the flexibility and control offered by the pre-recorded format can create a more comfortable setting for students to develop their self-confidence even when some students continue to experience camera-related anxiety.

Theme 3: Technical and Environmental Barriers

Technical and environmental barriers emerged as a significant challenge faced by approximately 56.9 % of Malaysian ESL students in this study. This theme is related to students' practical difficulties in recording their informative speeches particularly in finding suitable recording spaces, accessing appropriate equipment, and managing technical requirements. The recording environment was a common concern among students. One student described "My main challange is Place to record my informative speech.Its hard to find a peaceful and quite environmet. Since I am staying at a college hostel with my housemates, it was challenging to find a quiet place to record my speech because there were often background noises and interruptions." (S11). Similarly, another student noted that "Needed time and space, sometimes the room college is too loud and noisy." (S19), while S24 stated that "If im recording in my hostel there's a bit of distraction.". In addition, S8 simply mentioned "surrounding" as a challenge. These responses suggest that noise, limited space, and frequent interruptions made it difficult for students to create a suitable environment for recording their presentations.

Beyond environmental constraints, some students faced difficulties related to equipment, internet connectivity, and technical skills. S6 mentioned that "my camera is not very hd and sometimes when i want to edit the videos, it will have an wifi issues because sometimes the video editor videos need the internet to download the videos that we're already edited". Similarly, S3 admitted, "I'm not a tech savvy person, so when it comes to editing i fall short and in my opinion it made my video quite bland." In the same vein, S5 also reported challenges related to finding "a good lighting and background," and having to "clear my storage phone" to complete the recording. Overall, the findings indicate that environmental conditions, equipment limitations and technical skills can create additional challenges for students in completing their

pre-recorded speaking task. Hence, students had to manage not only the content and delivery of their speech but also the practical requirements in producing a recording.

Technical and environmental barriers specifically also appeared to constrain students' delivery and their ability to engage an intended audience. Students were seen to have some "problems with noise and mispronounce the word" (S38) while another student mentioned "I had difficulty memorizing my script and there was noise disturbance during the recording" (S43). Such difficulties may disrupt the flow of delivery and make it harder for students to maintain a natural connection with their intended audience. This shows that technical quality directly affects delivery and audience connection. These findings align with research documenting technical barriers in higher education. Tukan (2024) found that fear of technical issues, such as problems with PowerPoint slides or microphones during recording, can significantly increase students' stress and anxiety, as these issues might negatively affect their grades. Similarly, Alumalai & Paramasivam (2023) identified technical anxiety as creating additional psychological burden. From a pedagogical perspective, Tugrul (2012) emphasised that educators need to provide clear guidelines and support to help students overcome technical challenges related to recording and distributing videos. Overall, these findings suggest that technical and environmental barriers may affect students beyond the practical process of producing a recording, potentially influencing the conditions under which they are able to demonstrate their communication competence.

Theme 4: Skill Development and Awareness

Skill development and awareness was the most prevalent theme identified in students' reflections. This theme reflects students' awareness of specific communication behaviours that they perceived as areas for further development after observing and evaluating their own video recordings. Notably, students were able to identify specific behaviours and developed clear targets for improvement. For example, S41 identified aspects of verbal and non-verbal delivery that affected the effectiveness of the presentation. "I was able to spot areas that needed improvement, like speaking too fast, using filler words like "um,""uh" or having awkward pauses.", and "I noticed how often I moved my hands, shifted my weight, or avoided eye contact. Some gestures helped emphasize my points but others made me look nervous." Similarly, another student recognised specific aspects of performance that required improvement: "I learned that I need to improve my eye contact, reduce filler words, and control my speaking pace." (S28). These reflections show that students were able to distinguish between effective and less effective behaviours and identify specific areas for improvement.

Other students demonstrated awareness of how their speaking habits were influenced by their emotions. As noticed by S22, "I learned about my speaking habits that I may speak faster when nervous or let my voice go flat during key points.". Meanwhile, S35 showed awareness across several aspects of communication: "It helps me to know what i need to improve my speaking. Sometimes my speaking sounds more like memorizing the whole text so the outcome not natural. Also i noticed that my face expression and body language need improvement." Beyond identifying individual weaknesses, S37 demonstrated a broader insight by stating "Watching my own recording helped me become more aware of my strengths and areas for improvement." Overall, these concrete and specific observations suggest that students were able to identify actionable improvements across multiple communication competence dimensions.

Skill development and specific competence awareness were evident across all three dimensions of communication competence. In terms of knowledge, students demonstrated awareness of how effectively their content was organised and communicated, including whether their introduction adequately prepared the audience and whether their conclusion summarised the main ideas. For verbal delivery, the students identified specific issues such as speaking too quickly, using filler words, and speaking in a monotone voice. In relation to non-verbal delivery, students recognised which gestures supported their message and which could be distracting. Students also associated awareness of their progress with greater confidence and motivation to continue practising. For audience engagement, students identified areas such as varying their pace and maintaining more eye contact that could contribute to a more engaging presentation.

These findings align with extensive research on formative feedback and self-assessment. Panadero (2016) found that concrete, specific feedback supports competence development better than vague feedback. Similarly, Tukan (2024) reported that students who reviewed and evaluated their recordings were able to recognise speaking mistakes, suggesting an understanding of the content knowledge in their speech. Tailab and Marsh (2020) likewise found that students who assessed their video-recorded presentations developed greater awareness of their speaking strengths and weaknesses, facilitating more focused revisions and performance improvements. Indriani (2020) also found that preparing presentations using learners' own strategies can support their comprehension skills. Self-generated awareness may be particularly valuable as it is grounded in students' observation of their own performance rather than abstract critique. In the Malaysian ESL context, Kho and Ting (2024) similarly found that awareness of specific communication skills can contribute to students' confidence. Ngadiran et al. (2024), further reported that video self-assessment contributed to increased speaking confidence, improved use of presentation strategies, and enhanced audience engagement across all dimensions. Overall, the present findings suggest that a pre-recorded assessment provides students with opportunities not only to identify weaknesses in their performance but also to develop more specific awareness of the communication behaviours they can target for improvement.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study examined how pre-recorded speech assessments impact the dimensions of communication competence among 51 Malaysian ESL university students. Rather than producing similar effects across all dimensions, the findings indicate the benefits and challenges of video-based assessment were experienced differently across the dimensions examined. Four themes emerged from the study: (1) reflective learning and self-awareness, (2) psychological impacts, (3) technical and environmental barriers, and (4) skill development and specific competence awareness. A key contribution of the study is therefore its demonstration that the perceived impact of pre-recorded assessment is not uniform across communication competence. These findings have important implications for assessment design in Malaysian higher education. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, pre-recorded assessment can be designed more strategically according to the aspects of communication competence it is intended to support. The findings suggest particular potential for supporting knowledge, non-verbal delivery, and confidence through opportunities for self-reflection, repeated practice, and increased awareness of performance. For verbal delivery and audience engagement, complementary activities such as live practice, peer interaction, and authentic presentation opportunities should be provided to students. To materialise this, teachers should be provided with appropriate training to recognise the different affordances and limitations of pre-recorded assessment and design their assessment practices accordingly. In addition, institutional support through suitable recording spaces, quality equipment, and stable internet connectivity is also important to ensure that technical and environmental barriers do not limit students' ability to benefit from video-based assessment.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing understanding of pre-recorded speech assessment by showing that its pedagogical value lies not simply in its potential to replace live presentations, but in how it is designed and used to support particular aspects of communication competence. Pre-recorded speech assessment can be a valuable tool for Malaysian ESL education when used strategically. It provides students with opportunities to reflect on their performance and builds specific skill awareness. However, pre-recorded assessment may be more effectively used alongside live communicative activities for aspects of competence that depend on spontaneous interaction, immediate audience responses, and authentic communication pressure. When used this way, with a clear understanding of what video can and cannot improve, it becomes a powerful part of comprehensive communication development.

This study is not without limitations. As the findings were derived from 51 Malaysian ESL university students, they reflect the experiences of a specific group of learners and should therefore be interpreted within this context. Future studies could extend the investigation across different Malaysian higher education institutions and ESL learning environments to provide a broader understanding of learners' experiences with pre-recorded assessment. Further research could also examine how individual learner

variables, including English language proficiency, digital literacy, and personality characteristics, shape students' experiences of video-based tasks. The field would also benefit from integrating objective performance metrics to validate students' self-perceived progress during their recorded informative speeches. Pursuing these scholarly directions could yield strong evidence for the strategic refinement of pre-recorded assessments in Malaysia, thereby enriching the global discourse on technology-mediated evaluations in the ESL classroom.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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