An Investigation of the Relation between Self-esteem, Indirect Strategy Use and Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Oral Language Proficiency

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Abstract—The main purpose of the present study was to empirically investigate the possible relationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' self-esteem, their use of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social), and their foreign oral language proficiency. From among 136 EFL learners who were studying English in two language institutes in Anzali- Iran, 30 intermediate students whose scores were 31+ in grammar and vocabulary and 8+ in reading section of the OPT test(oxford solution,2005)were selected as the main sample for the present study. Oxford' strategy inventory including 21 items for the indirect strategies along with Sorenson self-esteem test were administered to the main participants of the study. Besides, an oral language test (TOEIC test) was administered to assess the participants' oral language proficiency. The non-parametric test of chi- square along with measures of association namely Eta and Spearman Rank Order Correlation test were run to the data gathered through the questionnaires and the oral test. The findings revealed statistically significant relationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' self-esteem, their use of indirect strategies, and oral language proficiency. The findings of the study may have some pedagogical implications for foreign language teachers, course designers, parents, and learners.

Index Terms—self-esteem indirect strategies, foreign oral language proficiency

I. INTRODUCTION

Currently oral proficiency has received great attention as a language for international communication in the English context as a second or a foreign language (ESL/EFL). Speaking skill is also of great import because of the large number of students who want to study English to be able to use English for the purpose of communication. Richards and Rodger's (2002) have also emphasized the importance of speaking skill in their publication. They stated that "A large number of the world's language learners study English in order to improve their proficiency in speaking" (p. 201).

Stern (1995) states that concepts such as self-concept, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-confidence are often employed alternately in the literature. He believes that the major rational might be that they all suggest different notions about how people perceive themselves. Some researchers contemplate self-concept and self- efficacy as equivalent pattern, but others consider them as two disconnected structures (Choi, 2005).

Huitt (2004) demonstrated the difference between the two concepts namely self-concept and self-esteem and declared that self-concept is related to the cognitive aspect of self, but self-esteem is concerned with affective aspect of self, which refers to one's perceptions and perspectives of self-value.

Miyagawa (2010) discriminated between self-confidence and self-esteem. He expressed that self-confidence is related to what we can do of our attempts. What we are good and bad at. He asserted that self-confidence develops along with the nature of the effort and self-esteem is more fundamental and is about the sense of being significant.

Erikson (1963) and Stern (1983) highlighted the role of affective factors such self-esteem in learning a foreign language. They put into words that the way people assess themselves would influence the process of foreign language learning.

Many studies have investigated the relationship between self-esteem and English skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Adelaide Heyde studied the effects of the three levels of self-esteem on American college students' oral proficiency who were learning French as a foreign language. The findings showed that all three levels of self-esteem had positive association with the learners' oral proficiency. Moreover, the highest degree of relationship was found between task self-esteem and oral proficiency.

Kamarzarrin (1994) evaluated the relationship between the EFL intermediate students' self-esteem and their speaking skills. It was found that there was a statistically significant correlation between the students' self-esteem and their verbal

performance. Besides, Oxford believes that suitable language learning strategies affect learners' self-esteem in situations like language learning and inspires them to learn the language in a superior way.

The main concern of this study was to see if such a relationship could be detected among Iranian female intermediate EFL learners' implementations of using indirect strategies including meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies, their oral language proficiency and the way they evaluate themselves.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Iranian EFL learners desire speaking skill as a language ability to have communication in target social situations. It seems that the speaking capacity has close relationship with EFL learners' use of indirect strategies and their amount of self-esteem. Therefore, it seems that oral language proficiency can be developed by empowering EFL learners' careful engagement of indirect strategies and helping them to have good self-esteem. A number of studies (Gonzalez-Pienda, Nunez, and Gonzalez-Pumariega, 2000) have proved the impact of self-esteem, which is normally categorized as an affective factor, as one of the important factors that can direct success in academic performance in general. Educational psychologists have ventured to analyses the different types of relationship that exist between self-esteem and performance. Nevertheless, the results acquired until now are disputable in terms of the relationship between these variables. In other words, it is not obvious if self-esteem enhances academic achievement or, academic success improves one's self esteem. For instance, Marsh, Kong, and Hau (2001) reported that their participants' English self-esteem was positively affected by their English achievement. On the other hand, Marsh, Relich, and Smith (1983) in their research found that the learners' school performance was highly affected by their academic self-esteem. Thus, it seems evident that there is a significant association between these two variables.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has pedagogical importance and increases experts' realization of probable relations of students' self-esteem and their foreign language speaking skill and their preferred indirect language learning strategies. By conducting this research it can be shown if self-esteem is related to EFL learners' speaking proficiency and teachers will recognize the possible association between the learners' use of indirect strategies and their reported self-esteem.

This research has also psychological importance because self-esteem is one of the psychological factors. By noticing the possible positive or negative connections self-esteem may have with speaking skill, teachers of English institutes, university Professors, etc., can recognize and foster the positive feelings and lessen the negative feelings in students and promote their oral language proficiency. Best teaching methods in speaking can be devised and practiced by knowing how students feel about themselves. Teachers will be able to motivate students for participating in class activities and help them overcome those negative feelings they may have about their capabilities.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present research is to find a way to enhance the students' and EFL teachers' understanding about the relationship between self-esteem and language learning strategy and academic achievement more specifically the foreign language learners' speaking proficiency. Moreover, it is aimed to remove or lessen difficulties EFL students experience in their language learning and emphasize the important role of self-esteem in foreign language learning.

There are few studies focusing on EFL female intermediate learners' self-esteem, their use of language learning strategy and their oral language proficiency, particularly in Iran. In addition, the findings may help the language-teaching professionals and material developers in the process of settling the English as a foreign language courses and assists them for better creation of language programs for study.

This study intends to understand the possible association between self-esteem and language learning strategies. It intends to explore whether low self-esteem and high self-esteem learners are different in using indirect language learning strategies.

V. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Self-esteem has been interpreted as the "inclination to perceive oneself as being capable to manage the obstacles of life and deserving happiness" (Branden 1994, as cited in Rubio, 2007, p. 5). Self-esteem is one of the significant issues in human beings. When a person has low self-esteem, it brings lack of self-confidence, concern, social distance and other negative circumstances. Self-esteem has crucial influence on a person's life. Rubio (2007) believes that when there is very weak self-esteem, this may even require clinical treatment. Tracey (2006) points out that making changes in the feeling of a person who suffers low self-esteem, and preventing him from his negative feelings is worthless.

Young (2005) states, "Some people consider self-esteem as the way we perceive and conceive ourselves. It includes our self-assessment and our recognition of self-esteem. Some researchers believe that self-concept includes nature, abilities, and manner of thinking that characterize a person" (p.55).

Rubio (2007) claims that family context a well as social environment can have a prominent effect on self-esteem, particularly during age of puberty. However, the early educational settings are the most influential time for the growth

of self-esteem. Enhancing healthy and adequate self-esteem is very important. School has a determining impact on the individual's self-esteem. In school, students are continuously judging their capabilities in classroom activities and performances.

Concerning the association between self-esteem and EFL learners' achievement in second language situations, Hayati and Ostadian (2008) disclosed that EFL students' listening comprehension was significantly affected by their self-esteem.

Rubio (2007) stated that all available research shows that self-esteem is important for personal and academic growth.

The possible relationship between self-esteem and EFL learners' use of indirect strategies was the second purpose of this study. According to Oxford (as cited in Su & Duo, 2012) "learning strategies can be defined as unique actions seized by the learners to make learning process more comfortable, rapid, giving more pleasure, more self-directed, more productive, and more passable to new situations" (p. 335). Oxford categorizes strategies into two main groups: direct and indirect. Direct strategies include three groups of strategies: memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies also include three groups of strategies: meta-cognitive, affective, and social. Oxford believes that suitable language learning strategies could also influence learners' self-esteem in language learning and encourage them to learn the language to a greater degree (ibid).

Williams and Burden (cited in Lee, 2010) stated, "When students are involved in a learning task, they make use of several resources in different ways to accomplish a task, so this is called process of learning strategy" (p.204). Lee (2010) argues that "learning strategy is learning skills, learning-to-learn skills, thinking skills, problem skills or, in other words the procedures which learners employ to intake, store, and retrieve during the learning process" (p. 134).

As mentioned earlier this study tried to determine the possible relationship between indirect strategies and self-esteem. Meta-cognitive strategies as indirect strategies are useful to the learning process in the sense that learners will take control over and monitor what and how they learn. Cognitive strategies are more closely associated to the studying of specific language skills, involving the optimal techniques learners can use to cope with language tasks. From among indirect strategies, social and affective strategies are more connected with feelings and self-control, which is believed to have a significant role in progressing self-confidence, and cooperativeness (Ha, 2008).

It is believed that in the process of language learning, all types of learning strategies are helpful and essential. In learning situations in which language competence is the main goal, the cognitive strategies may be of more importance because these strategies are directly related to the language tasks (Ha, 2008).

Rubin (1975) believes that competent language learners are described by their individual learning style or beneficially learning strategies, a functioning approach to the learning task, a tolerant approach to the target language, and more as a distinct evidence system while learning to think about it.

Ha (2008) regards that learning strategies are determined as instruments for active, self-directed action, which is primary for making learning and developing communicative and language competence smoother. According to Weinstein and Mayer (1986), language-learning strategies (LLS) are understood as a change from stressing teachers and teaching process to emphasizing the role of learners and learning process. The purpose of strategy use is to "influence the learner's inspirational or emotional conditions or the procedures in which the learner picks out, attains, or interacts new knowledge" (cited in Saleh, 2013).

Pramita (2012) examined the possible association between self-esteem and the students' English proficiency. The results showed that there was positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and the students' English proficiency for second year students. In other words, the students with higher self-esteem had better and increased English proficiency in comparison to the students with low self-esteem.

Hayati and Ostadian's (2008) research revealed that Iranian EFL learners' self-esteem affected their listening comprehension significantly. In other words, self-esteem was considered as a psychological factor that had a positive relationship with learners' English language listening comprehension. Their results indicated that self-esteem had a more important role in improving females' listening comprehension than males'. Hayati and Ostadian further concluded that this might be attributed to the fact that females are more affected by psychological factors in language learning than males. Female learners were more successful in English language listening comprehension tasks than male learners.

Khajavi (2013) discusses that one possible reason for students' failure in language learning is their lack of sufficient knowledge in terms of the ways and techniques for learning a language. He suggests that language teachers can teach learners techniques and strategies of language learning. For example if learners are weak in learning vocabulary, teach them how to learn vocabulary through repetition, practice, memorization and association.

Su (2005) showed that the participants used language-learning strategies moderately. Social learning strategies were the most frequently used strategies. Besides, memory strategies had least frequency in comparison to other strategies. The Participants, who had higher self-perceived English proficiency, used language-learning strategies higher than those who had a lower self-perceived English proficiency level.

Lee (2010) asserts that language learners who use language-learning strategies more than others do usually attain greater language proficiency, and research into L2 learning indicated that good language learners used strategies more frequently and appropriately to enhance their target language learning.

Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the possible relationship between indirect language learning strategies of EFL students with high or low self-esteem and their oral language proficiency.

VI. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there a relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem and their use of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social?)

2. Is there any relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem and their oral language proficiency?

3. Is there a relationship between EFL learners' Oral language proficiency and their use of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social?)

VII. NULL HYPOTHESES

H01. There is no relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem and their use of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social).

H02. There is no relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem and their oral language proficiency.

H03. There is no relationship between EFL learners' Oral language proficiency and their use of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social)

VIII. METHODOLOGY: THIS STUDY EMPLOYED QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN TO PROVIDE ANSWER TO THE ABOVE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A. Participants

Thirty Iranian female EFL learners at intermediate level in Anzali were selected from among those who participated on Oxford Placement Test. The intermediate participants were selected based on OPT test direction. These participants took part in an oral language proficiency test, self-esteem questionnaire, and strategy inventory questionnaire.

B. Instruments

A series of instruments were employed in the present study:

1) An OPT test were administered to determine the language proficiency of the learners. The test contained 50 multiple-choice questions that assessed students' knowledge of key grammar and vocabulary, a reading text with 10 graded comprehension questions. Based on the scoring table of the test, the students who had +31 correct answers in grammar and vocabulary part and +8 correct answers in reading part were considered to be as intermediate level of language proficiency.

2) Speaking test of TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) were used to determine the speaking ability of the students. TOEIC Speaking Test comprised tests of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, overall coherence. The speaking test was chosen from TOEIC test book. For each type of question, participants were given specific directions, including the time allowed for preparation and speaking. This test included 11 questions that measured different aspects of the speaking ability. The test lasted approximately 25 minutes. Then two raters evaluated the speaking ability of the participants at the end of the speaking test. As there were two raters, the inter-rater reliability was necessary whether or not their given scores are reliable.

3) A questionnaire taken from Sorensen (2005) containing 50 items were given to the participants to measure the degree of participants' self-esteem.

4) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version7.0 (Oxford, 1989) was used to measure learners' language learning strategy use. The questionnaire consisted of 50 questions. In order to minimize the possible error because of learners' comprehension of English, a Persian version of the questionnaires were used.

C. Procedure

First, in order to select the main participants, an OPT test was administered among e female foreign language learners studying English in a language institute in Anzali- Iran. Based on OPT test direction, 30 intermediate EFL learners were selected for the main study. Then they took part in an oral language proficiency test (TOEIC test). The scores of the participants were assigned based on the speaking scale developed by Farhady, et. al. (1995) consisting of five components of pronunciation, structure, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Afterwards, the same participants answered Sorenson self-esteem questionnaire. The questioners then were collected for the purpose of analysis. It should be mentioned that a pilot study was conducted to determine the extent of time required for the completion of the strategy and self-esteem questionnaire and to estimate the reliability indices for the instruments used to collect data.

D. Data Analysis

An attempt was made to find answers to the above three questions concerning the relationship between self-esteem and speaking skills, self-esteem and use of indirect strategies, and speaking skills and use of indirect strategies. Appropriate statistical procedures were conducted to obtain the required responses for each question. Since two raters gave the scores of speaking skills of the participants, estimating the inter-rater reliability was necessary to determine whether their given scores were reliable and consistent. The consistency of the two raters' judgments was tested using Pearson correlation analysis. Normality assumption was checked before running Pearson Correlation coefficient. Data gathered through administering the questionnaires to the sample were analysed to determine the participants' preferred

learning strategies and the amount of their self-esteem. Afterwards in order to examine research hypotheses, quantitative approach including some statistical tests such as chi- square, Eta, and Spearman rank order tests was run.

IX. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Pilot Study

1. Reliability analysis of the OPT test, self-esteem questionnaire, and language learning strategy inventory (pilot study)

The reliability of 60 items of the OPT test, 50 items of the self-esteem questionnaire, and 21 items of the strategy inventory were estimated through a pilot study on 15 EFL learners. The estimated values of Cronbach alpha were all higher than the minimum required. The results are presented in Table1.

TABLE 1:
RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
OPT test	**.733**	60
Self-Esteem Questionnaire	**.781**	50
Language Learning Strategy Inventory	**.813**	21

2. Reliability analysis of the oral language test (pilot study)

The reliability of the oral test was estimated through test- retest method by administering the test of English for International Communication test (TOEIC) to the pilot study group twice and the correlation between these two sets of scores was computed. The final score for each subject on the oral language test (TOEIC test) was the mean of the two raters' scores in each administration. There was 15 days interval between the two administrations and it seemed to be logical amount of time as it was supposed that no significant change would happen in the examinees' knowledge during the determined interval between the two administrations. The reliability estimate is presented in the following table:

TABLE 2:
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND ADMINISTRATION OF TOEIC TEST

		TOEIC test second administration
TOEIC test first administration	Pearson Correlation	.867**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	15
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

Table 2 revealed the results of the Pearson correlation that was run for estimating the reliability index of the TOEIC test through test- retest method. The value obtained was **.867** that showed considerably high correlation between the results of the TOEIC tests on two different administrations.

3. Inter- rater reliability analysis of the TOEIC Test

For evaluating each learner's oral performance, the researcher used criteria that were adopted from those specified in the TOEIC Speaking Test Directions.

Two different scorers who were experienced foreign language teachers scored the oral production of the participants. The consistency of the two raters' judgments was tested using correlation analysis that showed a relatively high level of inter-rater reliability for the TOEIC test scores in two administrations in the pilot study. The obtained reliability indexwas ($r_1 = 0.875$):

TABLE 3:
CORRELATIONS

		Rater B
Rater A	Pearson Correlation	.875**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	15
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

B. Main Study

1. Measure of EFL Proficiency (OPT test for the sampling purpose)

To select homogeneous sample for the study, the standardized Oxford Placement test (OPT) was administered to 136 EFL students. It included items related to the structure, vocabulary and reading comprehension. The maximum possible score was 60 points. Based on OPT test direction 30 intermediate students whose scores were 31+ in grammar and vocabulary and 8+ in reading section were selected as the main sample for the present study. The results of the OPT test for 136 students are presented in the following table:

TABLE 4:
STATISTICS

OPT test		
N	Valid	136
	Missing	0
Mean		37.0294
Std. Error of Mean		.63913
Median		38.0000
Mode		39.00
Std. Deviation		7.45350
Variance		55.555
Skewness		-.413
Std. Error of Skewness		.208
Kurtosis		.025
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.413
Range		38.00
Minimum		17.00
Maximum		55.00
Sum		5036.00

2. Examining the normality of the distribution

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to estimate the test-retest reliability analysis for the TOEIC test as well as the correlation coefficient between the two raters of the oral test. Normality that is the main assumption of Pearson correlation was examined through Skewness analysis before running the main statistical analysis. The following table highlighted the relationship between two administrations of the TOEIC tests and the scores given by the two raters. It showed the normal distribution of these variables, too.

TABLE 5:
STATISTICS

		Translation text (First administration)	Translation text (Second administration)	Ratera	Rater B
N	Valid	15	30	30	30
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		33.9333	34.2667	32.8000	33.9000
Std. Error of Mean		.63220	.74621	.53691	.51718
Median		34.5000	35.0000	32.5000	34.0000
Mode		31.00[a]	36.00	30.00	32.00[a]
Std. Deviation		2.44852	2.89005	2.94080	2.83269
Variance		5.995	8.352	8.648	8.024
Skewness		**.476**	**-.512**	**.263**	**-.135**
Std. Error of Skewness		.580	.580	.427	.427
Kurtosis		-.609	-.008	-.982	-.756
Std. Error of Kurtosis		1.121	1.121	.833	.833
Sum		509.00	514.00	984.00	1017.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The results of Skewness analysis revealed that the assumption of normality was observed in the distribution of the scores and the distributions were normal and symmetric. Meanwhile, The Skewness and Kurtosis values reported in the table were all within the range of ± 2, suggesting that the distributions were normal.

C. Is There a Relationship between EFL Learners' Self-esteem and Their Use of Indirect Strategies (Meta-cognitive, Affective and Social?)

The following null hypothesis was formulated:

H01. There is no relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem and their use of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social).

The main purpose of the first research question was to examine the possible relationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' use of indirect language learning strategies and their self-esteem. Based on Oxford's (2005) taxonomy, indirect strategies included three groups of strategies metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Moreover, Sorenson self-esteem test was used to evaluate the participants' self-esteem.

The following cross tabulation table was used to examine the possible relationship between the two variables namely level of self-esteem and EFL learners' use of indirect strategies.

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TABLE 6:
CORRELATIONS

			Selfesteem	Indirect strategies
Spearman's rho	Selfesteem	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.929**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	30	30
	Indirect strategies	Correlation Coefficient	-.929**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	30	30
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The Crosstabs procedure offered Spearman rho that measured the association and agreement of the collected data from the indirect strategies and Sorenson questionnaire.

The correlation between intermediate EFL learners' use of indirect language leaning strategies and their self-esteem was determined through calculating pair- wise associations for the mean ranks of total indirect language learning strategy use and self-esteem ranks. The findings are available in the above table. The strength and direction of the relationship between self-esteem (ordinal variable) and total indirect strategy use (ordinal variables) was calculated.

The results of the Spearman's rho showed that the association between EFL learners' use of indirect language learning strategy and their self-esteem was statistically significant (P=.000< .05). The negative sign of the Spearman correlation was related to the coding procedure of Sorenson questionnaire. This pointed to the positive association between indirect language learning strategy use and the participants' self-esteem. Based on Sorenson self-esteem test, those who check 0-4 statements have fairly good self-esteem, 5-10 statements have mild low self-esteem, 11- 18 statements have moderately low self-esteem, 19-50 statements have severely low self-esteem. In other words, if EFL learners tended to use more indirect language learning strategies, their self-esteem was also high. Consequently, the first null hypothesis was rejected suggesting that there was a significant relationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' use of indirect language learning strategies and their self-esteem. In order to assess the association between the participants' self-esteem and their use of each sub- categories of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social), another Spearman Rank Order correlation was run to the results of the self-esteem test and sub- components of indirect learning strategies. The findings are available in the following table:

TABLE 7:
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' USE OF INDIRECT LANGUAGE LEANING STRATEGIES AND THEIR SELF-ESTEEM

			metacognitive	affective	social
Spearman's rho	self-esteem	Correlation Coefficient	-.887**	-.790**	-.893**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**	**.000**	**.000**
		N	30	30	30

As it is depicted in the above table, the highest degree of correlation was reported for the association between self-esteem and social strategies (rho= .893) closely followed by metacognitive strategies (rho= .887). The lowest correlation was found between self-esteem and affective strategies (rho= 790).

D. Is There Any Relationship between EFL Learners' Self-esteem and Their Oral Language Proficiency?

H02: Is there is no relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem and their oral language proficiency.

For the second research question, the data gathered from the Sorenson test were converted into nominal data (0-4 statements= fairy good self-esteem; 5-10 statements = mild low self-esteem; 11- 18 statements = moderately low self-esteem; 19-50 statements =severely low self-esteem). Afterwards, a chi-square test examined the possible relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem and their oral language test scores.

TABLE 8:
CHI-SQUARE TESTS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Linear-by-Linear Association	21.500	1	**.000**
N of Valid Cases	30		

The two-sided asymptotic significance of the chi-square statistic (.00) was lower than 0.05, so it was safe to say that the relationship between these two variables was not due to chance variation, which implied that each participant with specific level of self-esteem disclosed different oral language proficiency. To show the strength and direction of this relationship, Eta test was run the results of which are presented in the following table:

TABLE 9:
DIRECTIONAL MEASURES

			Value
Nominal by Interval	Eta	Oral language test scores(Dependent)	.873
		Self-esteem (Dependent)	.937

Based on the results of Eta test, there appeared to be a significant positive association between level of self-esteem and oral language test scores (Eta= .873).

The positive relationship implied that the students with higher level of self-esteem revealed higher oral proficiency and vice versa. Thus, the second null hypothesis is rejected implying that there is a positive relationship between EFL students' level of self-esteem and oral language proficiency.
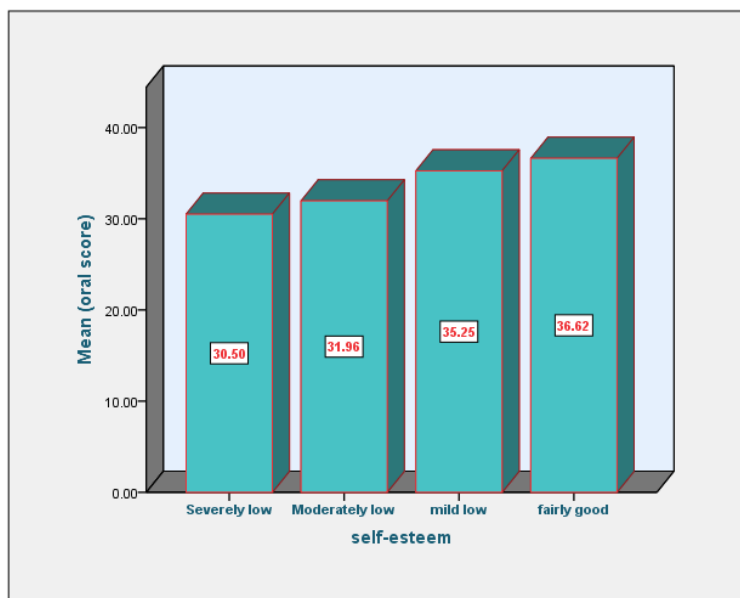

Figure 1: the relationship between EFL learners' self-esteem and their oral language proficiency

The above chart, ordered by ascending frequencies, visually compared the relative frequencies among the four groups with different levels of self-esteem in terms of their oral language scores. As it is shown by the graph, the participants with high scores in oral test were those who reported fairly good self-esteem in Sorenson self-esteem questionnaire.

E. Is There A Relationship between EFL Learners' Oral Language Proficiency and Their Use of Indirect Strategies (Meta-cognitive, Affective and Social)?

H0 3: there is no relationship between EFL learners' Oral language proficiency and their use of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social).

To compare the extent of the correlation between intermediate EFL learners' use of indirect language learning strategies and their oral language scores, another Spearman rank order was run to the results of the participants' learning strategy inventory(indirect strategies) and oral test (TOEIC). The findings showed that the degree of correlation between EFL learners' use of indirect language learning strategies and their oral language scores was significant ($p \leq 0.05$).

TABLE 10:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFL LEARNERS' ORAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND THEIR USE OF INDIRECT STRATEGIES

			Indirect strategies
Spearman's rho	Oral test scores	Correlation Coefficient	.910[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**
		N	30

The value of Spearman rank order for the intermediate EFL learners equaled .910. The sig value (.000) was lower than (.05) indicating that the relationship was significant. This rejected the third null hypothesis and suggested that there was no relationship between EFL learners' Oral language proficiency and their use of indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social).

To compute the degree of association between EFL learners' oral test scores and each of the indirect language learning strategies another Spearman rank order correlation was run to the results of oral test scores and every sub-category of indirect strategies. The results are presented in the following table:

TABLE 11:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFL LEARNERS' ORAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND EACH OF SUB CATEGORIES OF INDIRECT STRATEGIES

			metacognitive	affective	social
Spearman's rho	Oral test scores	Correlation Coefficient	.801[**]	.879[**]	.855[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	**.000**	**.000**	**.000**
		N	30	30	30

As it is depicted in the above table, the relationship between oral test scores and all the three subcategories of indirect learning strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social) was statistically significant (sig= .000, p≤0.05).

This time, for the participants, the value of Spearman rank order for affective category amounted to (.879), that for the social strategies came to (.855), and for the metacognitive strategies equaled to (.801).

F. Discussion and Conclusion

The examination of the correlation between self-esteem and EFL students' speaking skill indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between the two variables. As it is demonstrated by the findings, learners who had higher levels of self-esteem had also better presentation in the speaking test. Learners with a high degree of self-esteem highly respect themselves and believe their own abilities. They perceive themselves to be efficient and believe that they can go over well in learning English. Consequently, they try hard to execute very competently while speaking in the foreign language. However, students whose self-esteem is low think that they do not achieve what they want in language production because they do not have the ability to talk to and understand English verbal exchanges. Since these groups of learners are not certain of their general ability to learn English, consequently they demonstrate the least attempt to talk and finally have low speaking.

Moreover, the findings showed a significant relationship between utilization of indirect strategies and self-esteem. It can be inferred that those with good self-esteem tended to be more successful in using indirect strategies. Although individuals emotionally hold success superior to failure regardless of their levels of self-esteem, they assume their future performance consistent with their self-esteem (McFarlin & Blascovich, 1981, p. 527). In other words, subjects with high self-esteem predict higher levels of future attainment for themselves while low self-esteem individuals presume to be unsuccessful. As a result, individuals with high self-esteem who tend to be accepted by others will try to gain more success in their tasks to indicate themselves more positively to others. They comprehend that they will put to use a great deal of attempts and for that reason deserve to succeed. This may help subjects with high self-esteem to be sure of themselves in their prediction of future tasks.

However this is inconsistent with Maruyama, et al. (1981, p. 972). They give reasons that success in education is highly regular across time. They state that most social scientists who have regarded attainment as free from self-esteem at least have viewed self-esteem as reflecting past achievement (p. 973). Unlike the findings of Maruyama, et al. (1981), it can be inferred from the findings of this study that psychological factors such as self-esteem influence on academic achievement and more specifically foreign language learners' oral proficiency. Contrary to the findings of the present study, Maruyama, Rubin and Kingsbury (1981, p.973) stated that causal relations between achievement and self-esteem may happen during the first years of school when both self-esteem and achievement are unstable. The results of the current study revealed that there are reciprocal relations between these variables. As a whole, it was mentioned that there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and speaking skill.

In agreement, of what Brown and Heyde mentioned, the findings showed that self-esteem were found "to be positively correlated with the performance on the oral production measures" (Heyde, 1979, quoted by Brown, 1980, p.104).). It suggested that in foreign language learning situations, learners could be expected to perform better in their oral performance by enhancing their self-esteem related to their task. Such enhancement will help them have better comprehension of their abilities in their oral skills. The findings of the present study were also partially in line with the findings of NikiMaleki & Mohammadi (2009). They found that the more prosperous learners regarding the oral communication had higher self-esteem than the less successful ones in carrying out oral communication tasks.

Finally, several studies have suggested that learning, in general, cannot be achieved without taking into consideration the psychological factors (Carter &Nunan, 2001; Derville, 1966). Most of language learning problems are closely related to psychological factors out of which self-esteem is a main topic that has important effects on language learning. It can be concluded that no activity will be fulfilled successfully without self-esteem (Huitt, 2004).Finally, Demo and Parker (1987) stated that in real situations both self-esteem and language learning are important factors. Language learning can have impact on the degree of self-esteem and vice versa. As Erikson (1963), states we always look for stable identity, covering our knowledge of who we are, what our weaknesses and strengths are, and, in short, how we evaluate ourselves.

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