

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AMONG BUSINESS STUDENTS IN THAILAND

BY

MISS SIRINADDA KAWEEWATTANA

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH FOR CAREERS LANGUAGE INSTITUTE THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR 2015 COPYRIGHT OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

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INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER

BY

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ABSTRACT

Communication skills play a vital role in people's lives. Thus, students who have excellent skills in language and communication are more competitive in the job market compared with the others who have average or poor skills in language and communication. Due to the increasing demand for oral communication skill, which is used widely in universities' and colleges' curriculum in Thailand, fluency in oral communication in English is needed among graduate students, particularly for the business students who conduct their degrees in an international program. Oral communication skills in graduate students have played an important role in course requirements and activities in class for university students. It is the research objective to identify and understand the different levels of CA among students in order for the business academe to identify the causes of communication difficulties experienced by students and gain information about these communication problems. This study utilized a quantitative research method to gather data for this research. The participants in this study are first-year and second-year students from an international business program in graduate level at a public university in Bangkok, Thailand. There are 156 students enrolled in this program; 79 first-year graduate students (n = 79, 29.1 % male = 23, 70.9 % female = 56) and 77 second-year graduate students (n = 77, 39 % male = 30, 61 % female = 47). For the first-year students, the majority of students are Thais (98 %, n = 77), one Canadian (1 %, n = 1), and one Taiwanese (1 %, n = 1). For the second-year students, the majority of students are Thais (99%, n = 76) and one Chinese (1%, n = 1). The response rate for first year students was 86% (n = 55) and for second year students was 85% (n = 53). As for results from the quantitative data collection, it has been shown that the business students had moderate CA while the overall CA score of second-year students was higher than CA of first-year students. First-year and second year students were in moderate range of communication apprehension and also in three perspectives of communication which are group discussion, meetings, and interpersonal conversation, while CA in public speaking among those students was higher than other perspectives which indicates small degree of apprehension. In a comparison of communicating in Thai language and English language, students in second-year had higher overall CA score when communicating in English language than their score when communicating in Thai language.

Keywords: communication apprehension, communication skills and business students

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Skills in communication play an important role in people's lives. Oral communication skill is generally necessary for graduate students due to the increasing demand for global competitiveness and increased knowledge sharing (Jackson, 2014). Accordingly, oral communication is one of the most essential employability skills which is needed in employment for new graduates (L. L. McCroskey, Teven, Minielli, & Richmond McCroskey, 2014). Business students should concern themselves with developing the skills and confidence in delivering oral presentations for education and future work purposes (Alwi & Sidhu, 2013). There is a more increasing awareness of second language competency and communication skills for Thai business students following the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 because it could affect their careers in the future. Students who have excellent skills in language and communication are more competitive in the job market compared with others who have average or poor skills in language and communication.

In addition, with the increasing demand of the oral communication skill used widely in universities' and colleges' curriculum in Thailand, fluency in oral communication in English is needed among graduate students, particularly for the business students who conduct their degree in an international program. Oral communication skills in graduate students have played an important role in course requirements and activities in class for university students. Oral presentation is one of the important features of university education in different parts of the world today. As Morita (2000) observes, the oral presentation is a "frequent, highly routinized part of classroom life" (p. 258) in higher education settings. In addition, putting more emphasis on oral activities, such as oral presentations, has been gaining in popularity in the business courses these days. Students are required to get involved with peers and teachers for in-class discussions, presentations, pitching, or speeches. Many students are faced with nervousness and fears concerning communication activities or situations which can prevent them from developing their communication ability.

Experiences of moderate or high levels of speaking anxiety affected both the achievement and performance level of the majority of the students (Wang, 2010). Communication apprehension (CA) generally refers to fears or concerns when people communicate with others either orally or in writing or both (Byrne, Flood, & Shanahan, 2009). Thus, this study will focus on the aspect of communication apprehension (CA) among graduate students major in business at an international program at a public university in Thailand.

Research Questions

From the motivation for conducting this study, the researcher designed several guiding questions for the study for the purpose of managing the scope of research. The research questions are as follow:

1. What are the communication apprehension levels of the business students in the program when they are communicating with others in their first and second language?

2. Do second-year students have lower CA score than first-year students?

3. What are some major methods that first-year and second-year students apply to cope with CA?

Research Objectives

It is the research objective to identify and understand the different levels of CA among students in order for the business academe to identify the causes of communication difficulties experienced by students and gain information about these communication problems. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are composed of three parts. Firstly, it aims to measure the levels of oral communication apprehension among business students. Secondly, it examines if second-year students have lower CA score than first-year students. It also explores the methods that students apply to handle their CA obstacles. The study was focused on students in both first-year and second-year classes in order to discover their CA levels and to compare CA score between first- and second-year students. Primarily, it is the researcher's desire to pinpoint CA as the ultimate cause of the student's inability to communicate

effectively and failure to complete the program. Also, it will identify the different coping mechanisms that students in their first and second year levels use that helped in dealing with CA.

Definition of Terms

The term **business students** concerns first-year and second-year graduate students enrolled in a business program (international program) of a public university located in Thailand.

The term **communication apprehension** (CA) pertains to "a fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others," according to McCroskey (J. C. McCroskey & et al., 1977).

The term **PRCA-24** is an acronym of Personal Report of Communication Apprehension questionnaire, which is a tool that identifies the situational anxiety level that individuals face when asked to speak.

The term **trait-like communication apprehension** describes "a relatively enduring personality-type orientation toward a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts," as defined by McCroskey (J. C. McCroskey & et al., 1977).

Significance of the Study

With regard to this researcher's personal experiences as a teaching assistant to professors of an international program in business at a public university in Thailand, I have engaged with students in the program for many years. In my experience, the drop-out rate of students at the program is usually high in the first-year students. According to my conversation with one student who dropped out from the program on the first year of the course, this student explained that the decision for quitting the program was the lack of communication skill in the English language which brought concern to the ability to complete the curriculum.

However, backgrounds of education, difficulty of work schedules, economic status, and health issues might cause students' decisions to withdraw from class.

Despite those points, there are some students who are unable to graduate because of their poor academic performances. These students must leave the program in between their academic years, and some have to leave the program in their last trimester. From my observation of asking students who decided to drop out from the program for their reasons, it appears that the fear of communication during certain situations or sharing their opinions with friends or instructors is one of the causes that resulted in their moderate academic performances.

In addition to my experience of students' activities in class, I have noticed that first-year students tend to have more fear of communicating than second-year students. Many first-year students do not want to express themselves in many activities, such as asking professors some questions, sharing ideas during the process of classwork, and especially during presentations in front of the classroom. Delivering a presentation is reported to be the most anxiety-provoking situation among students (Woodrow, 2006). Obviously, students with high concerns and fear in communication mostly falter when giving oral presentation to others; sometimes they cannot control their physical reaction and forget the script. However, when they are in the secondyear class, students appear more relaxed and confident with their communication skills.

To conclude, this research came about per the observations and live experience of the researcher and it intends to fully understand the phenomenon of the difficulty of students to communicate with others without the feelings of fear and anxiety. With this in mind, the researcher aims to fully comprehend this experience and hopes to gain information for encouraging students to become more confident in their communication skills.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to the study. These include data collection bias since the information from the study was only collected from one graduate degree program. Another is a limitation on the type of information gathered as the study used self-report instruments, which may be inaccurate, to gather data on students' level of CA as the respondents may not provide truthful answers in the survey, thus leading to integrity bias, despite the instrument being widely used. Lastly, language barrier bias may exist since the questionnaire used, PRCA-24, was written in English which some respondents may not be able to understand fully or may have difficulty in comprehending the entire point of the questions.

The study was organized as follow. Firstly, the study defined communication apprehension. It consists of the definition of CA, causes and effects of CA, and the measurement of CA instrument, which measures a student's level of oral communication apprehension. Secondly, in the next chapter, it discussed the research methodology which described the process of data collection, participant profiles, and the instrument that was adopted for this study. Thirdly, in chapter four, results and discussions of this research are reported and in the last chapter of this study conclusions and recommendations are addressed for further studies and implications of this study are also discussed, while a sample of the questionnaire is shown in the appendix as quantitative research method was applied in this study.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

An important aspect of communication that deals with avoidance and anxiety is communication apprehension (CA) (McCroskey, 1984). According to McCroskey (1970), communication apprehension is linked to anxiety and is driven during oral communication. However, a later work by McCroskey illustrated CA as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or imagined communication with another person or persons."

Two major forms of communication apprehension are described in terms of oral and written aspects. The original focus of CA, according to the work of Gardner, Milne, Stringer, & Whiting (Gardner, Milne, Stringer, & Whiting, 2005), is on the oral aspect, but researchers later discovered that it too was concerned with the written aspect.

Although there is a significant difference between CA and communication ability and skill per se, as most people can still communicate despite communication anxiety, studies show negative relations between CA and communication ability and cognition (J. C. McCroskey, 1976). It was found that poor grades and low academic performance on examinations were characteristics of students with high levels of CA. Moreover, these individuals also showed inability to cope in challenging job interviews (Ayes, 1993; Ayers & Crosby, 1995). Therefore, it is suggested per the evidence that high levels of CA have a negative consequence on general performance.

The two approaches of lessening experiences of CA focused on behavioral and pedagogical interventions. The first, behavioral approach highlights "communication tasks, work on an individual's physiological and/or psychological state" (McCroskey, 1984) and further focuses on "stematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, assertiveness training, stress release exercises and visualization techniques" (McCroskey, 1984). The second approach, pedagogical intervention, is a direct way

of decreasing apprehension by focusing directly on successfully promoting communication tasks.

Definition of Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension was addressed as communication bound anxiety (McCroskey, 1970). McCroskey (1970) described that communication apprehension (CA) is "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." For every person, communication apprehension experiences differ in terms of uniqueness and this varies according to a real or perceived communication which may end differently according to the effectiveness, amount, and desire to communicate (Richmond (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998)). Each person has different anxiety or apprehension for each situation. People with CA try to stay away from communication due to their personal feelings. McCroskey (1977) explained that "the construct of 'communication apprehension' should be considered a sub-construct of reticence or unwillingness to communicate. While the construct specifies that people with high levels of CA characteristically avoid and/or withdraw from communication, it differs from the other constructs in that it specifies only fear and/or anxiety as the causal element. Although theory relating to CA recognizes that avoidance and withdrawal behaviors can be the result of other causes, these are seen as falling beyond the scope of the CA construct." It is noted that communication apprehension signifies fear and/or anxiety as the primary cause of oral communication avoidance and/or withdrawal.

There is a difference between CA and other concepts such as reticence (Phillips, 1973) and unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon and Hale, 1983). The difference between these two concepts is based on the origin of the problem. The first, reticence and unwillingness to communicate, has its origin in the behavior of the individual towards communication for it refers to hidden communication behavior, such as oral communication avoidance and/or oral communication withdrawal, that may be a result of several causes, namely, low self-esteem, introversion, alienation, etc. In simplified terms, reticence is inability to communicate effectively. CA, on the other hand, has its root in the cognitive aspect. Thus, reticence and unwillingness to

communicate is more of a behavioral problem. As defined by J. C. McCroskey and Baer (1985), a person's willingness to talk is merely his or her choosing to communicate. Communication apprehension, being an internal, cognitive state, is mainly driven by fear of communicating (Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998). It has been said that CA can anticipate willingness to communicate but not the other way around. There are two different ways where individuals experience CA and these are communicating orally or in writing. The prior, oral CA, is experienced when talking with people, it be may in a one-on-one interview, in a panel, in giving reports during a meeting, or in public speaking in general. However, the latter, written CA, is an expression of communication apprehension when an individual is asked to write a report, essay, academic manuscripts, and the like.

There are two divisions of communication apprehension according to McCroskey (1982, 1984) and these are trait CA and state CA. By definition, state CA is fear or anxiety towards a specific oral communication situation. In a continuum, CA, being a construct that progressed over time, can move from trait-like to situational CA. There are four categories of CA: first, trait-like CA; second, context-based CA; third, audience-based CA; and situational CA.

Trait-Like CA

Traits like eye color and height are referred to as true traits as they are the invariable distinctions of an individual. Moreover, trait-like personality variables, which are oftentimes resistant to change, at some point vary from childhood to adulthood (Gardner et al., 2005). Thus, trait-like CA, according to McCroskey (1984), is defined as "a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation towards a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts."

It is a person's inclination towards communicating and it differs in terms of contexts and situations. Hence, trait-like CA encompasses all levels of CA from group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking; fairly all situations that involve communication which individuals have to be a part of at one

point or another. As proposed by Beatty et al. (1998), trait-like CA is something that remains and endures, for a change in a person's characteristic is never easy.

Context-Based CA

Unlike trait-like CA that occurs in all types of situations, context-based CA mainly happens in certain situations but may fail to occur in others. Though it may remain and endure just like trait-like CA, it is restricted to a certain single general context, such as speaking in public, in front of a meeting or class, in a small closed-group discussion, or in a dyadic interaction (McCroskey, 1982, 1984).

Audience-Based CA

Audience-based CA is defined as being "concerned with a person's reactions to communicating with a given individual or group of individuals across time" (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). McCroskey also states that "audience-based CA is a relatively enduring orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people" (1984).

Situational CA

This type of CA is the orientation of the individual towards communicating with a particular individual, at a particular time, and in a particular context (Beatty et al., 1998). Fairly every person experiences situational CA at one point in time. This type of CA occurs when speaking with a certain individual in a given circumstance, like in a job interview or public speaking, which is a characteristic of CA conceptualization. As described by McCroskey (1984), situational CA is "a response to the situational constraints generated by the other person or group."

Causes of Communication Apprehension

It is difficult to identify the factors contributing to communication apprehension. There has been much research carried out in this area which has considered possible causes of CA. Genetic and environmental factors contribute to trait-like CA (McCroskey, 1982). The hereditary characteristics of an individual are a vital component of trait-like CA. Also, the place or environment where an individual thrives, especially during his or her younger years, is an essential contributor to a person's level of CA experience. Moreover, the family, aside from genetics, can contribute to the level of trait-like CA (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). Richmond and McCroskey (1998) stipulated that "children are born with certain personality predispositions, such as sociability. How this sociability is treated by parents can often determine whether a child will develop high CA or not."

Gender, age, education, background, income, and culture are often linked to CA levels and may be regarded as unique for every individual. It has been reported that the female gender is more likely to experience communication apprehension than the male counterpart during public speaking (McCroskey, 1982). Previous researches have also observed that the socioeconomic status is also a defining factor of CA and reported that students belonging to the low-income group have lower levels of oral CA than students in the high-income class (Lang, 1998). This may come as a surprise, but one explanation is selection bias, in terms of getting only the more equipped speakers from the low-income group. Likewise, students with less than average marks (unprepared students) have lower levels of CA compared to the traditional students, such may be due to the aversion of most colleges from admitting students coming from the low-income class (Andriate & Allen, 1984). In terms of cultural aspects, studies in several countries have been conducted. One instance is a study showing that Japanese students are more likely to experience apprehension that those coming from the US, though it must be noted that high oral CA has different implications in both countries (Pryor, 1995). This is because the Japanese culture, being collective in nature and education, requires less of their people in the sense of assertion than that is required of individuals in the US. Likewise, for students coming from Taiwan, a higher oral CA is reported than those from the US (Hsu, 2004). This is because the Taiwanese culture follows that of Japan and has stressed more on collectivism than the US's individualistic culture. Hence, when interpreting studies of students coming from different countries, one must take note of these cultural differences.

To sum up, there is no one explanation to shed light on why individuals differ in terms of apprehension levels, but one thing is certain, at some point people tend to develop a tendency towards both oral and written CA and that the environment plays a role in influencing the levels, be it trait-like or context-based experience.

Effects of Communication Apprehension

According to Rimkeeratikul (2008), high levels of CA has a negative effect and this can affect a person's ability to communicate effectively, learn suitable communication behaviors, develop effective communication skills, and refine an encouraging attitude towards communication (McCroskey, 1997). A myriad of results will follow when students have high CA; this may vary from inability to ask questions in class, making them unremarkable, which may lead them to cut classes or exclude necessary subjects, and, worst, this could lead to depression which would affect the student's performance during aptitude examinations and as a result make them get lesser marks during a teacher's evaluation (O'Mara, 1996; Bowers, 1986). In some instances, individuals with high levels of apprehension may try to hide their communication fear by talking or speaking more, though this is a rarity (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998).

As cited by Richmond and McCroskey (1998), there are two impacts of CA. These are internal impact and external impact. The first type, internal impact, denotes a fear and anxiety of communication. It is true that individuals with high levels of CA may exhibit high levels of anxiety, dogmatism, and external control (Daly and McCroskey, 1975). The first dimension of the external impact of CA is the communication aspect. As explained by Richmond and McCroskey (1998), avoiding communication, withdrawing from communication, and disrupting communication are the three classic patterns. As stipulated by McCroskey (1997), no communication, less communication with others, and communication disruption are observed and significant in individuals with high levels of CA.

The following are the effects of CA on communication behaviors:

(1) There are three domains within human learning. These are (a) the cognitive learning that signifies understanding or knowing, (b) the affective learning that deals

with feelings of like or dislike, and (c) the psychomotor learning that denotes the physical capability of doing.

(2) There are three aspects of desirable communication learning. These are (a) competence in communication which focuses on learning and acquiring suitable communication behaviors, (b) skill in communication which concerns yielding fitting communication behavior, and (c) affect during communication which emphasis the value and desire to create proper communication behaviors.

Communication apprehension has a significant influence on the three components of communication learning and this has a long-term effect on the individual's behavior (Beatty et al., 1998). The inability to communicate effectively is correlated to high CA. Thus, people having high CA communicate less and tag the experience as negative (Beatty et al., 1998). High CA levels in people can affect the quality and quantity of communication behaviors (Allen & Bourhis, 1996). Aside from the negative impact of high CA in communication, it also has a vital influence on a person's daily life, namely in the areas of education, employment, financial stability, relationships, and self-worth. Thus, CA and academic achievement are inversely related.

It has already been noted that individuals with high CA learn less. Thus, a person with high CA in a native language must be address this first before he or she can learn a new language successfully, such as English (J. C. McCroskey, Gudykunst, & Nishida, 1985).

From the employment perspective, individuals with high CA levels have less chance to advance in the career ladder than their counterparts, as effective communication is required in an organization and CA is a hindrance to it (J. C. McCroskey & Richmond, 1979). The researchers have highlighted that, "effective communication is central to the efficient operation of an organization, whether public or corporate, and to effective participation of individuals within organizations." Also, individuals with high CA have low self-esteem and regard themselves as ineffective, this may in turn affect their employment negatively (Rimkeeratikul, 2008). Per McCroskey and Richmond's report, "high CAs consistently have been found to be perceived to have lower competence, lower leadership, lower sociability than other people and to be less likely to be turned to for opinion leadership than other people" (J. C. McCroskey & Richmond, 1979). In terms of economic achievement, high CA is an impediment. Richmond and McCroskey (1984) addressed that chiropractic doctors, who have lower CA level, gained more income than those with high CA level.

In terms of interpersonal relations and convincing communication, people with high CA are viewed as unattractive and dubious (Rimkeeratikul, 2008). J. C. McCroskey, Richmond, Johnson, and Smith (2004) reported that people with high CA find it hard to sustain a long-lasting relationship with others.

It is also important to note that individuals with high CA have less self-respect and suffer from low self-esteem more than those with low CA. According to Daly (1979), a negative relation exists between oral CA and self-esteem. In conclusion, the study above concludes that there is a correlation between one's perception and the characteristics one places on this perception; it may be in terms of attitude, behavior, evaluation, and cognition.

Measurement of Communication Apprehension

McCroskey (1984) reports that there are three major approaches to the measurement of CA. The first approach is the measurement of physiological reactions of an individual to the communication situation. The second approach is the evaluation of communication apprehension using observer ratings and the third approach is the self-report measurement (McCroskey, 1970). Self-report is the most employed method to measure CA. Self-reporting is an easy and less expensive way of assessing an individual's feeling towards self (McCroskey, 1970). It is believed that the most effective approach to get to know a person is by simply asking him or her; this way, one is directed to the individual's feeling without fearing a consequence of the answer (McCroskey, 1997).

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) questionnaire was designed by McCroskey (1984). It is a self-report which is used to measure oral

CA. He also developed it in many versions: 20-item, 10-item, 25-item, and 24-item. All of these self-reports use five-point Likert scale. The PRCA-24 measures oral CA in four contexts: one-to-one communication, meetings, group discussion, and public speaking. This questionnaire includes six statements for each of the four contexts. Respondents mark their score for each statement using five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); there are no right or wrong answers to this questionnaire. Half of the statements are positively worded and the other half are negatively worded. Then the scores from all four sub-contexts are summed up to get the overall score for each individual. The overall CA score ranges from 24 to 120 points.

According to King (1988), it is important to emphasize each value of the four CA contexts; there is a tendency of the total PRCA-24 score to not show high apprehension results in one or more of the sub-contexts. It was Vinson and Roberts (1993) that made an analysis on the between-context variance scores of the PRCA-24 (this is the variance between CA in one-to-one context, group discussions, meetings, and public speaking). It was suggested by Vinson and Roberts (1993) that "the between-context variation represents an estimate of the individual's location on the trait-state continuum." According to them, "the lower the variations, the more trait-like the person's CA, and conversely, the higher the variation, the more state-like the person's CA." An individual's CA level is related to the importance of context. Thus, people with low apprehension level find the context not significant, while people with moderate and high apprehension levels may have the same (high) scores in both public speaking and meetings and (low) in the one-to-one context; but this may be different in the group context of which moderate apprehension levels may show lower scores (McCroskey & Richmond, 1984).

There is some limitation to this instrument. According to Bline (2003), selfreporting may not be credible as individuals may tend to give untrue information about themselves which cannot be verified. Also, a selection bias may be evident as the respondents may not represent the general population. However, in spite of these limitations, Simons, Higgins, and Lowe (1995) claimed that PRCA is the best tool to measure oral CA which is widely used in many research studies.

Previous Related Studies

Communication anxiety is a hindrance in successfully communicating in situations like talking to a colleague, engaging in a group conference, one-on-one or panel interviews, or delivering instructions to employees (Hamilton, 2011). Individuals that feel very anxious or have high anxiety level suffer fates and labels like incompetence, not getting the job during the interviews due to poor impressions, moderate or low-paying jobs, job dissatisfaction, and not being promoted for a higher position (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). As a matter of fact, a report by Richmond and McCroskey cited that about 95% of people interviewed in the United States suffer from a certain degree of communication anxiety. It is also noted that individuals who have hearing impairment may have suffered from anxiety when communicating with other people (Booth-Butterfield, 1988). It should be pointed out though that the levels of anxiety differ for every culture. This is true for Chinese, Americans, and Puerto Ricans. According to researchers, the Chinese (Zhang, 2005) and Chinese in Taiwan (Hsu, 2004) have more anxiety when communicating than their American counterparts; however, Puerto Ricans suffer less anxiety than the Americans, except when they are asked to speak in the English language (J. C. McCroskey & et al., 1983).

Speech anxiety refers to a term that denotes feelings of fear or anxiety when asked to speak in public. Communication apprehension (CA), on the other hand, is a term used by academic researchers that delineates feelings of fear or anxiety on communication in general. Communication apprehension has four different types which can be self-assessed per level. Several reactions have been verbalized by students who experience fear and anxiety when speaking in public, such as feeling stupid, unintelligent, weak, and less courageous. Nevertheless, several communication researches convey that communication apprehension makes no correlation to an individual's mental capacity or talents and skills. It even has no relation to whether the individual is male or female since both genders suffer from public speaking anxiety. However, research results from Aly and Islam (2003) depicted "that GPA, gender, job status and years of experience have an effect on determining the level of CA for business students" (Aly & Islam, 2003).

Studies on Oral Communication Apprehension Among Business Students

The variations on the level of oral CA have been explored by some researchers among students taking up accounting as compared to those enrolled in different business majors. The first to explore communication apprehension among business and accounting students were Stanga and Ladd (1990), and these researchers observed that accounting students in their introductory level had slightly above average levels of oral CA than that of the national average. Simons et al. (1995) conducted a study in the US and found that accounting major students had higher oral CA scores than those taking up other business majors, and the researchers also perceived that the prior had the highest scores in three out of the four communication situations, namely, interpersonal, group discussion, meeting, and public speaking. In another longitudinal study conducted in the US, Aly and Islam (2003) noticed no significant differences in the oral CA levels of students at the beginning and after completing the programs. Based on declared majors, Aly and Gowing (2001) affirmed that no differences were noted in the level of CA of students.

A determinant factor in getting a job in accounting firms is the GPA. But, the applicant's communication skills and capacity will determine if he or she gets the job during the second or final interview. A link has been noted between GPA, which is the effort level or achievement in the previous course, and communication performance. There have been several researches supporting this that are available in the literature of both industrial and applied psychology (Taylor, 1998). Also, there are a number of studies that have identified the link between oral communication apprehension levels and academic performance, however the results are deemed not conclusive. According to a study by Warnock and Curtis (1997), there seems to be no connection between oral CA and students' overall academic performance. Also, there is only a little evidence that shows a relation between oral apprehension levels and academic performance (Gardner et al., 2005). However, the research study conducted by Allen and Bourhis (1996) demonstrated results that show a correlation between high levels of oral CA and lower academic achievement. On a similar note, Arquero et al. (2007) disclosed a very apparent negative connection between oral CA and academic self-rating.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the previous outline, this study utilized a quantitative research method to gather data for this research. This research aims to measure the levels of communication apprehension among business students at a public university in Bangkok, Thailand. The purpose of this study is to examine differences in CA level among first-year students and second-year students. The reasons for choosing this target group are, firstly, the researcher has been connected with students in this program, with the role of a program coordinator, so it is convenient for the researcher to conduct a study with the students; secondly, it is a an international master's program in business management specializing in marketing; and, finally, all courses in the study plan of this program are conducted in English language.

Courses in this program are intended to encourage students to participate and introduce an environment that stimulates students to use their communication skills through, for example, in-class discussions with the instructor and peers, question and answer sessions, group works, and presentations. In order to complete the degree's requirement, these business students have to register for a Consumer Behavior course in their first year of study and a Marketing Research course in their second year of study as they are compulsory courses in the curriculum. These two courses are similar in terms of students' group projects which require them to use four contexts of their communication skills, namely, interpersonal conversation, group discussion, meetings, and public speaking.

The Consumer Behavior course featured a team project on consumer behavior. Each student team consisted of 5-6 people per group and chose a topic for the project. Students were given a list of companies and they selected one of the companies. The team was expected to assemble consumer-related facts relevant to the target product. The students acted as a group of consultants hired by the target company to evaluate the "consumer information" and develop a "marketing" strategy to increase the sales of the brand. This strategy should be based on a comprehensive analysis of the relevant consumers. The brand could be either an existing one or a new one. Two outcomes are expected from this project. First, a presentation should be made to the class during the last week; and, second, a comprehensive report at the end of the course should be produced. Consumer research is required in this project. Every group has to conduct a primary consumer research using either 4 focus groups (3 users and 1 past/non-user) or 25 (20 users and 5 past/non-users) individual in-depth interviews. In the end, the students make a presentation to the class. The presentation is to last no more than 20 minutes. The students presented their project to judges who are experts in each industry invited by the program. The presentation lasted for 20 minutes and 10 minutes was allotted for Q&A. The class asked several questions and challenged recommendations from the teams. All the members of the group were required to make the presentation. This project was conducted in the English language only.

The objective of the Marketing Research course is to introduce students to the scope and function of marketing research. An instructor gave an assignment on a market research project for a client. This was conducted in groups, and the project involved an applied practical market research project for a real client. In this case, the program cooperated with the Marketing Research and Insights Department of the Charoen Pokphand group in order to assign a market research project to students. The research was conducted in phases from preparing and planning phase to data processing phase. Then, each group delivered an oral presentation of the research problem and objectives, the methods used, the results, and the recommendations to their clients. For the research project presentation, each group was allowed to have 30 minutes in total, 20 minutes for presentation on their project. This assignment was conducted in the English language only.

Participants

The participants in this study are first-year and second-year students from an international business program in graduate level at a public university in Bangkok, Thailand. There are 156 students enrolled in this program; 79 first-year graduate students (n = 79, 29.1 % male = 23, 70.9 % female = 56) and 77 second-year graduate students (n = 77, 39 % male = 30, 61 % female = 47). For the first-year students, the majority of students are Thais (98 %, n = 77), one Canadian (1 %, n = 1), and one Taiwanese (1 %, n = 1). For the second-year students, the majority of students are The second-year students, the majority of students are Thais (99%, n = 76) and one Chinese (1%, n = 1). All participants are based in Thailand, mostly working full time and studying part time. They are from a variety of backgrounds. Eighty percent of the sample finished their bachelor's degree in the field of business and management, and the remainder, from a mix of educational backgrounds, such as engineering, pharmacy, arts, and sciences.

Year	Population	Response	% Response
First-year students	64	55	86%
Second-year students	62	53	85%
Total	126	108	86%

Table 3.1. Pop	ulation and S	Sample R	esponse Rate
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Table 3.1 shows the different population of each group and their respective response rates. It was intended to have everyone included as participants, except that when the questionnaires were submitted based on the attendance for the day, some were not able to comply. One instance was from the 79 first-year students, where a total of 64 question sets were distributed, but only 55 were filled out and returned to the researchers and 7 of which were inadequately filled out and deemed useless. Another was from the 77 second-year students. Here 62 question sets were distributed, but only 53 of which were filled out properly and deemed useful to the researchers.

Procedures

The business program students at a public university in Thailand in their freshman and sophomore years were the main focus of this research, gaining a total of 108 students as a research sample. They were advised to fully participate and were encouraged to cooperate in terms of answering the questionnaires completely. Per instruction from the business program director, the researchers got permission to conduct the study having first-year and second-year students as the participants. Questionnaires were then distributed to these students at their class during the final session of the fall trimester. This was done so as to expect a high completion rate given that the researchers were available the time they completed the questionnaires so questions in terms of clarity of instructions, the self-evaluation form, and confidentiality, given the direct presence of the researchers, were addressed right away. The downsides of this method though were the time constraint, as there was only a limited time to complete the questionnaire, and peer pressure, since the students get self-conscious filling out the self-evaluation form sitting next to someone they know. The PRCA-24 questionnaire was handed out to each participant at the start of the class. The students were then instructed to return the completely filled out questionnaires at the conclusion of the day or the next. These completed questionnaires were then labeled and numbered. The scores per participant, for each of the four contexts, as shown on the PRCA-24, were then tallied and summed up using the Excel program and thus determined the final CA score.

Research Instrument

As mentioned, data collection consisted of a questionnaire survey for measuring communication apprehension levels among students from first-year and second-year levels. The questionnaire was developed as an instrument for the student self-evaluation survey. The researcher selected PRCA-24, Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, an available and widely used tool to measure the level of communication apprehension (McCroskey 1982). "PRCA is the most commonly used for self-reported communication instruments," (McCroskey 1982). PRCA-24 is designed to report the anxiety level of an individual when delivering oral

communication in four areas: interpersonal conversations, group discussions, meetings, and public speaking.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts: (1) demographic data, (2) the PRCA-24, (3) personal information, and (4) CA score calculation. The instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire are stated on top of each section of the form. The first part of the questionnaire is the part that gathers relevant data on the background and demographic characteristics of the participants. In the second part, the PRCA-24 consists of twenty-four statements on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agree), 4 (agree), 3 (neutral), (disagree), to 1 (strongly disagree). This is to find out the students' level of CA according to their experiences in group work situations and the setting as they must deliver an oral presentation in front of an audience, which is composed of peers, instructors, and clients, and one question in which students were asked to identify a method that helped them in dealing with CA problems. In the third part, the respondents were giving their personal information and contact details for future references. Lastly is the part where students can calculate their CA score by using a formula provided and also see the result in the score rank stated in this section.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were employed for this study for the general background of the respondents. The CA scores of this target group were calculated from the PRCA-24 in order to determine their levels of communication apprehension when they use the English language and the Thai language in four contexts: group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conversation, and public speaking.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic of Respondents

This section represents the findings of data analysis from 108 respondents with different profiles, see the tables below for full descriptions on the demographics of respondents.

Table 4.1. Class Year of Respondents

Class	Ν	Percentage
First-Year	55	50.93%
Second-Year	53	49.07%
Total	108	100%

From Table 4.1, there were 108 students who attended this study of which 50.93% were from first-year students and 49.07% were second-year students.

Table 4.2. Gender of Respondents

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	40	37.04%
Female	68	62.96%
Total	108	100%

Table 4.2 shows that 40 male students, (37.04%) and 68 female students (62.96%) participated in this study. The female student population is bigger than the male population in the program.

Age	Ν	Percentage	
21-25	22	20.37%	
26-30	67	62.04%	
31-35	16	14.81%	
36-40	2	1.85%	
Above 40	1	0.93%	
Total	108	100%	

 Table 4.3. Age Range of Respondents

According to Table 4.3, the majority of the respondents' age is between 26-30 years old which counted as 62.04% then the second group is students who are aged between 21-25 which is 20.37% and 17.93% is students who are aged between 31 and above 40.

Educational Background	Ν	Percentage 50%	
Business and Economics	54		
Arts	21	19.44%	
Engineering	15	13.89%	
Science	18	16.67%	
Total	108	100%	

 Table 4.4. Educational Background

Students are from different backgrounds of education which can be grouped into 4 categories; Business and Economics, Arts, Engineering, and Science. Table 4.4 shows that 50% of students in this program had a business and economics education, 19.44% were from an arts background, 16.67% were from science majors and 13.89% were from the engineering field.

Table 4.5. Work Status

Work Status	Ν	Percentage	
Full-time employment	57	52.78%	
Business owner	21	19.44%	
Family business	10	9.26%	
Full-time student	17	15.74%	
Other	3	2.78%	
Total	108	100%	

Table 4.5 states that the majority working status of respondents is full-time employment (52.78%), second, business owner (19.44%), third, full-time student (15.74%), fourth, family business (9.26%), and other shown as freelance (2.78%).

 Table 4.6. Work Position

Work Position	Ν	Percentage
Administration staff	9	8.04%
Accounting staff	21	18.75%
Engineering staff	1	0.89%
Sales and Marketing staff	38	33.93%
Owner	27	24.11%
Other	16	14.29%
Total	112	100%

According to Table 4.6 there are 6 groups of work positions the respondents have. The majority of them works as sales and marketing staff (33.93%) then as business owners (24.11%), accounting staff (18.75%), administration staff (8.04%), engineering staff (0.89%), and other (14.29%) reported working in other businesses such as logistics, media, finance and banking, and teachers, and some reported to be unemployed.

Results from Quantitative Data Collection

This section shows results from quantitative data collection, the outcomes of which were described along with the research questions.

This portion highlights CA levels of first- and second-year students when they communicate using the Thai and English language, as the first and second language, respectively, according to the data from the PRCA-24 questionnaire. The results are stated in the section below.

First-Year Student Results

	Ν	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Group Discussion	55	23	6	13.51	3.89
Meetings	55	24	6	14.91	4.26
Interpersonal Conversation	55	23	6	14.69	4.09
Public Speaking	55	30	6	18.07	4.77
Total CA	55	97	28	61.18	14.76

Table 4.7. CA of First-Year Students when Using the Thai Language

As shown in Table 4.7, the overall mean score of the total CA when using the Thai language of the first-year students was 61.18 which is a moderate level of CA, the highest is 97 and the lowest is 28. As cited by McCroskey (1982), the range for CA score is from 24 to 120. Accordingly, scores lower than 51 denote a very low CA level. However, scores higher than 80 represent a high CA level.

Across the four communication contexts, three of the average scores were moderate except for the public speaking score which resulted in a small degree of apprehension. As depicted by McCroskey (1982), the scores in the four categories, namely, group discussion, with a mean of 13.51; meetings, with a mean of 14.91; interpersonal conversations, with a mean of 14.69; and public speaking, with a mean of 18.07, range from 6 (low) to 30 (high). Hence, a score higher than 18 denotes apprehension. To sum up, first-year students have high CA in public speaking and low CA in group discussion when communicating in the Thai language.

 Table 4.8. Percentage of First-Year Students on CA Level when Communicating

 in Thai

CA Score	Number of First-Year students	Percentage	Level
Below 51	12	22%	Low
Between 51 - 80	40	73%	Moderate
Above 80	3	5%	High
Total	55	100%	

According to Table 4.8, it was noted that there were 3 students scoring above 80 indicating a high CA level, hence they were those who are more apprehensive than the general public. Also, 12 students gained a score below 51, showing a low CA level; and about 40 students scored between 51 and 80, denoting a moderate CA score.

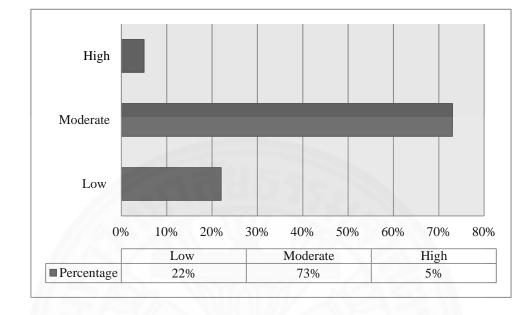


Figure 4.1. Percentage of First-Year Students on CA Level when Communicating in Thai

As shown in Figure 4.1, 5% of first-year students reported high communication apprehension, 22% noted low CA and 73% were in moderate CA.

	Ν	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Group Discussion	55	24	6	14.55	4.34
Meetings	55	24	6	16.73	4.54
Interpersonal Conversation	55	27	6	16.15	4.49
Public Speaking	55	30	11	19.44	4.60
Total CA	55	104	29	66.85	15.42

Table 4.9. CA of First-Year Students when Using the English Language

As shown in Table 4.9, the overall mean score of the total CA when first-year students use the English language was 66.85, which is a moderate level of CA, the highest score is 104 and the lowest score is 29.

Across the four communication contexts in the English language; group discussion, meetings, and interpersonal conversation, average scores were moderate, but public speaking score revealed some degree of apprehension. As depicted by McCroskey (1982), the scores in the four categories, namely, group discussion, with a mean of 14.55; meetings, with a mean of 16.73; interpersonal conversations, with a mean of 16.15; and public speaking, with a mean of 19.44, ranged from 6 (low) to 30 (high). Hence, a score higher than 18 denotes apprehension. With regard to communication using the English language, first-year students also have high CA in public speaking and low CA in group discussion.

CA Score	Number of First-Year students	Percentage	Level
Below 51	7	13%	Low
51 - 80	38	69%	Moderate
Above 80	10	18%	High
Total	55	100%	

Table 4.10. Percentage of First-Year Students on CA Level whenCommunicating in English

From Table 4.10, there are 10 students who have a high CA level (score above 80), denoting an experience of more apprehension than the normal average person's experience when communicating. Only 7 students scored below 51, which is a low CA level, and, hence, shows a low level of apprehension. 38 students scored between 51 and 80, denoting a moderate CA score.

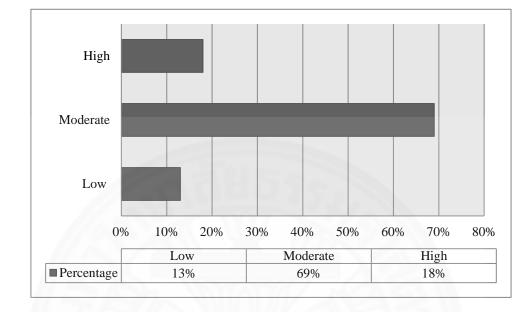


Figure 4.2. Percentage of First-Year Students on CA Level when Communicating in English

According to Figure 4.2, 18% of first-year students reported high communication apprehension, 13% of participants reported low CA and 69% were in moderate CA.

Discussion on First-Year Students' Communication Apprehension

To conclude, first-year students were in moderate range of overall CA and also in three categories of communication which are group discussion, meetings, and interpersonal conversation. However, CA in public speaking among first-year students was higher than other contexts which indicate a small degree of apprehension. As regards the first-year students' CA level, the PRCA-24 results indicate a moderate level of CA in most of the students when they use both the Thai and English language. About 5% and 18% of first-year students were categorized as having a high level of CA when they use the Thai language and English language, respectively. The percentage of 22% and 13% of first-year students from all the participants had a CA level which was low. The majority of first-year students have moderate CA level when communicating in the Thai and English languages while CA when communicating in English was higher than CA when communicating in Thai.

Second-Year Student Results

	Ν	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Group Discussion	53	22	6	14.66	3.50
Meetings	53	22	6	16.00	4.10
Interpersonal Conversation	53	24	6	15.45	3.85
Public Speaking	53	27	6	18.38	4.27
Total CA	53	91	26	64.49	13.50

 Table 4.11. CA of Second-Year Students when Using the Thai Language

As shown in Table 4.11, the overall mean score of the total CA when secondyear students use the Thai language was 64.49 which is a moderate level of CA, the highest is 91 and the lowest is 26. As cited by McCroskey (1982), the range for CA scores is from 24 to 120. Accordingly, scores lower than 51 denote a very low CA level. However, scores higher than 80 represent a high CA level.

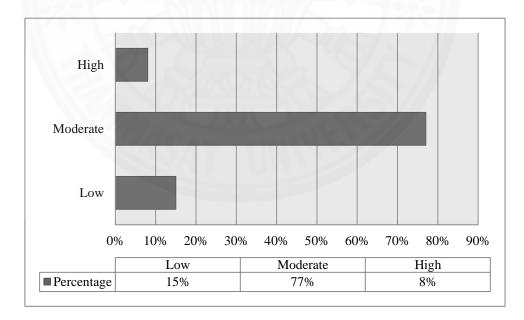
Across the four communication contexts, the average scores of group discussion, meetings, and interpersonal conversation were moderate. The average scores of public speaking were higher than that of the other three contexts. As depicted by McCroskey (1982), the scores in the four categories, namely, group discussion, with a mean of 14.66; meetings, with a mean of 16; interpersonal conversations, with a mean of 15.45; and public speaking, with a mean of 18.38, range from 6 (low) to 30 (high). Hence, a score higher than 18 denotes apprehension. This result revealed that second-year students have high CA in public speaking and low CA in group discussion.

CA Score	Number of Second-Year students	Percentage	Level
Below 51	8	15%	Low
Between 51 - 80	41	77%	Moderate
Above 80	4	8%	High
Total	53	100%	

Table 4.12. Percentage of Second-Year Students on CA Level whenCommunicating in Thai

According to Table 4.12, it was noted that there were 4 students scoring above 80, indicating a high CA level, hence they were those who are more apprehensive than the general public. Also, 8 students gained a score below 51, showing a low CA level, thus indicating a low apprehension level; and about 36 students scored between 51 and 80, denoting a moderate CA, which was the majority of second-year students.

Figure 4.3. Percentage of Second-Year Students on CA Level when Communicating in Thai



As shown in Figure 4.3, 8% of first-year students reported high in communication apprehension, 15% noted in low CA and 77% were in moderate CA.

	Ν	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Group Discussion	53	27	6	15.53	4.13
Meetings	53	28	6	16.77	4.85
Interpersonal Conversation	53	29	6	16.28	4.81
Public Speaking	53	26	6	18.43	4.24
Total CA	53	110	24	67.02	15.88

 Table 4.13. CA of Second-Year Students when Using the English Language

As shown in Table 4.13, the overall mean score of the total CA when secondyear students use the English language was 67.02, which is a moderate level of CA, the highest score is 110 and the lowest score is 24. There are 4 students who have high CA level (score above 80), denoting an experience of more apprehension than the normal average person's experience when communicating.

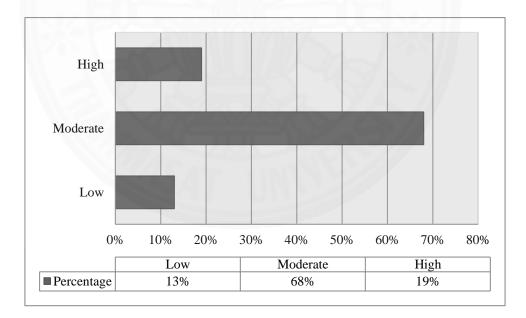
Across the four communication contexts in the English language, three of the average scores were moderate, which were the scores of group discussion, meetings, and interpersonal conversation. The public speaking score was a little bit higher at 18 which shows a small degree of apprehension. As depicted by McCroskey (1982), the scores in the four categories, namely, group discussion, with a mean of 15.53; meetings, with a mean of 16.77; interpersonal conversations, with a mean of 18.43; and public speaking, with a mean of 18.43, ranges from 6 (low) to 30 (high). Hence, a score higher than 18 denotes apprehension.

CA Score	Number of Second-Year students	Percentage	Level
Below 51	7	13%	Low
Between 51 - 80	36	68%	Moderate
Above 80	10	19%	High
Total	53	100%	

Table 4.14. Percentage of Second-Year Students on CA Level whenCommunicating in English

From Table 4.14, there were 10 students reported in high CA and only 7 students scored below 51, denoting a low CA level, hence showing a low apprehension level, while a total of 36 students scored from 51 to 80, indicating a moderate score of CA.

Figure 4.4. Percentage of Second-Year Students on CA Level when Communicating in English



From Figure 4.4, 19% of second-year students reported high in communication apprehension, 13% of participants reported low in CA and 68% were in moderate CA.

Discussion on Second-Year Students Communication Apprehension

The overall CA score of second-year students when they communicate in the Thai and English language was reported in moderate level. Students had higher CA when communicating in the English language than when communicating in the Thai language. In addition, group discussion, meetings, and interpersonal conversation scores were also moderate, while the score in public speaking indicated a small degree of communication apprehension. The second-year students with a low CA level were about 15% and 13% when they use the Thai language and the English language, respectively, in communicating, while about 8% and 19% of these second-year students scored a high CA level in both the Thai language and the English language and the majority of second-year students reported moderate in CA.

Comparison of CA Level between First-Year and Second-Year Students

An important objective of this research is to know if second-year students would have lower CA than first-year students with regard to their common behavior towards their peers, noting if the prior has a lower CA level than the latter. Second-year students have been with the program longer than first-year student and have spent a much longer amount of time with friends and instructors and they well understand the class environment, course structure, and course assessment.

Context	Class	Max	Min	Mean	SD
Cuern discussion	First year student	23	6	13.51	3.89
Group discussion	Second year student	22	6	14.66	3.50
Maatinga	First year student	24	6	14.91	4.26
Meetings	Second year student	22	6	16	4.10
Interpersonal	First year student	23	6	14.69	4.09
conversation	Second year student	24	6	15.45	3.85
Dublic greating	First year student	30	6	18.07	4.77
Public speaking	Second year student	27	6	18.38	4.27
Total CA	First year student	97	28	61.18	14.76
	Second year student	91	26	64.49	13.50

 Table 4.15. Comparison of CA between First-Year Students and Second-Year

 Students

Table 4.15 shows a comparison of CA between first-year and second-year students using the Thai language when communicating. The overall CA, when students in both year levels use the Thai language, are similar to each other: the total CA of the first-year students is 61.18 and the total CA of the second-year students is 64.49. The mean scores of the four contexts of CA and all the categories, respectively, when students use the Thai language, were moderate, while second-year students have higher scores than first-year students in all four communication perspectives.

Discussion on a Comparison of CA in First-Year Students and Second-Year Students

As highlighted from the results shown in Table 4.15, the proposition on the second-year students' level of CA is false, as second-year students actually showed higher CA level than their first-year counterparts. This may spring from the highly competitive nature of the sophomore year and the level of difficulty of the secondyear students' subjects. In addition, many courses in the second-year plan required group work and presentations in order to complete the course. Ultimately, secondyear students are reaching the end of their master's study; they might have higher anxiety and more stress than first-year students have. Moreover the researcher found that the majority of the second-year students have professional careers, while the firstyear students mostly work in family businesses or as entrepreneurs. Regarding entrepreneurial characteristics, people in this field normally have a high level of confidence and good communication skills in order to sell their products to customers or present their businesses to investors. Regarding this, the researcher had access to the second-year students' profiles which was updated with the students after this research was conducted, the profiles showed different information then as stated in the demographics of respondents section in this study.

Methods that Students Use to Deal with Communication Obstacles

Students from year one and year two classes gave some suggestions on what method to use when coming across communication obstacles. All these comments were from open-ended questions asked at the end of section 2 in the questionnaire.

Table 4.16. Recommended Methods to Cope with CA Problems from First-Year Students

Method Used when Coming Across Communication Obstacles from First-Year Students

- 1. Practice
- 2. Try to convince others by persuasive word and give them a reason
- 3. Using examples
- 4. Be focus, keep calm, and take a deep breath
- 5. Ask again or/and speak slower or/and repeat the question if I understand the question correctly
- 6. Practice and Rehearse
- 7. Prepare in advance if you know you'll be giving out speech or having meetings. Keep up to up-to-date events to be able to chit-chat with others
- 8. Practice and get used to talk with strangers or foreigner
- 9. Try to speak out as much as possible, when you start, it relieves your stress and you'll be more natural and confident
- I would try to use body language or encourage another to speak up more.
 Otherwise, I will try to find common story to keep them clam/relax
- 11. Use body language
- 12. Meditation
- 13. Note what I need to talk
- 14. Be well prepared
- 15. Keep myself calm
- 16. Memorize Practice Present
- 17. Smile, nod, say the word umm, something like that :D
- 18. Body language

 Table 4.17. Recommended Methods to Cope with CA Problems from Second-Year Students

Method Used when Coming Across Communication Obstacles from Second-Year Students

- 1. Prepare the information before
- 2. Use body language and gestures
- 3. Practice Practice Practice
- 4. Practice, Practice and Practice
- 5. Breath
- 6. Practice as much as you can
- 7. Practice
- 8. Practice
- 9. Speak slowly

Repeat the question

Ask the question in any parts that I don't understand

- 10. Practice
- 11. When you don't know what to do "smile" help you
- 12. Practice
- 13. Gesture

Visualization - Drawing/Image reference

Speak slower, hold amulet when speak in public
 Draw to illustrate, raise examples to explain

Discussion on Methods Used when Coming Across Communication Obstacles

At the end of the research study, the participants were asked to share their coping methods when faced with communication problems. Many shared based on their lived experiences, and the highly recommended coping strategy was practice. Other insightful methods are using body language, speaking slowly, giving examples, and doing positive visualizations. As shown in Table 4.16 and Table 4.17, the students' recommendations can be put into 6 categories which are (1) Practice/

Rehearse / Prepare, (2) Use example / Body language / Visualization / Convincing technique, (3) Calm / breath / meditation, (4) Smiling, (5) Slowly speaking, and (6) Repeat and ask questions. There were also some interesting comments from students, for example, "hold amulet when speak in public" and "smile," which illustrates the culture and local practices and beliefs in Thailand.

Discussion of Results

Results from the quantitative data collection show that these business students had moderate CA while overall CA score of second-year students was higher than CA of first-year students. Both, first and second-year students had high CA when they communicated in the English language which was higher than when they communicated in the Thai language. First-year students were in moderate range of communication apprehension and also in three perspectives of communication which are group discussion, meetings, and interpersonal conversation, while CA in public speaking among first-year students was higher than other perspectives which indicates a small degree of apprehension. Regarding second-year students, the overall CA score was reported in moderate level. In the comparison of communicating in the Thai language and the English language, students in second-year had higher overall CA score when communicating in the English language than their score when communicating in the Thai language. In addition, group discussion, meetings, and interpersonal conversation scores were also moderate, while the score in public speaking indicated some degree of communication apprehension. From the openended question at the end of questionnaire, students addressed some insightful methods they used when they come across communication obstacles. "Practice" was indicated as the most useful method among these respondents.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final part of the research paper brings the conclusion of this study. It summarizes the achievement of the research findings and results which accomplish the objectives of this study. Additionally, a few recommendations are provided for future references and future studies.

Conclusion

Communication apprehension (CA) has been defined as an "individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977). The CA phenomenon is one of the possible factors that affect student performance in class and employment opportunities among new graduates, especially for business students. This study focused on CA among business students at a public university in Thailand and explored the methods that students used to cope with communication obstacles.

To successfully reach the study objectives, the approach used for data collection was the descriptive method, while a quantitative method was adopted in order to quantify CA scores of first-year and second-year students in a business program, studying in a public university in Thailand. The CA score was measured using a self-report evaluation form from McCroskey's PRCA-24, which the researcher found appropriate for use in the English language because this unique business program is an international program; the students mainly use the English language to communicate with others. Every aspect of the study – design, conduct, and analysis – was carefully done.

The results of the quantitative data collection revealed that business students in this particular program had moderate level of communication apprehension (CA) overall and across the three common communication contexts – group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conversation, while CA in public speaking was slightly higher than others. Also, this study found that 13% of the students reportedly have a high CA. In addition, this study also found that 37% of the students reportedly have a low CA. The scores of CA for second-year students and first-year students are very similar, but second-year students were shown to have slightly higher CA than first-year students. This contrasts with the researchers' hypothesis that second-year students would have a lower degree of apprehension than first-year students. The method of dealing with communication apprehension was conducted as part of the questionnaire. This provided insightful information from the students' experiences when they are confronted with communication obstacles in different situations. Many found that practicing is the often solution used to cope with CA.

Recommendations

Oral communication skills are commonly known as an important key success factor for new graduates. This study explored the CA among business students and gained some insightful comments on the methods used for dealing with apprehension. While this study accomplished the research objectives, the weaknesses of this study include that first, results from the descriptive research method did not show a significant difference between first-year students' CA and second-year students' CA also in the four communicating contexts. Second, the population/respondents/sample were limited.

Several methods should be looked into to further study the topic of CA among business students in Thailand. This is to further the public's understanding of CA and their awareness of the effects of CA to students and the public in general. One method is to not only focus on this particular business programs' students but also to students taking up other business programs such as MBA or Executive MBA and business students in other universities in Thailand, for generalizability purposes. Another method is to conduct a study using a qualitative approach, such as focused group discussions, interviews, and direct observations, to potentially qualify a student's CA experience and gain insightful information. Moreover, other demographic characteristics must also be explored in order to understand the link between CA and variables like culture, personality, social status, gender, and academic performance. In addition, conducting a further study following the first-year students through their second-year and conducting a research on intercultural communication apprehension which is referred to as "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated interaction with people from different groups, especially different cultural or ethnic groups" (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997a, p. 147), could lead to more benefits in understanding in-depth the CA experiences of students.

Finally, this work's contribution could lead to understanding of communication apprehension among business students in Thailand in order to let educators acknowledge the effects of CA. From this researcher's personal perspective, this study brought an awareness of communication apprehension of the students in the program which will benefit my work and the institution in order to better advise students during their study. Moreover, learning experiences from this study built up a good relationship with students, which promotes goodwill for students and program officers.



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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Communication Apprehension among Business Students in Thailand Questionnaire



LANGUAGE INSTITUTE THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student from Master of Arts Program in English for Career, Thammasat University. For my research project in CR790 Independent Study, I am conducting a study to identify and gain insights into "Communication Apprehension among Business Students in Thailand". I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the attached surveys.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections and should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The instructions to fill out the questionnaire can be found on top of each section in the form. Your answer in the questionnaire will be kept confidential and will be used strictly for educational purposes only.

I sincerely appreciate and value your kind contribution to the research process. Completion and return of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. If you may have questions or concerns in any case, please don't hesitate to contact Ms. Sirinadda Kaweewattana at +66819262938 or email address: sirinadda.k@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Sirinadda (R.

Ms. Sirinadda Kaweewattana

QUESTIONNAIRE

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AMONG BUSINESS STUDENTS IN THAILAND

This questionnaire is research for the purpose of fulfilling the independent study (CR790: Independent Study) required for Master of Arts Program in English for Career, Language Institute, Thammasat University. The objective of this study is to identify and gain insights into Communication Apprehension among Business Students in Thailand. Your answer in the questionnaire will be kept confidential and will be used strictly for educational purposes only. Completion and return of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. I sincerely appreciate and value your kind contribution to the research process.

Section I: Demographic Information

Please mark $\ensuremath{\boxtimes}$ on the answer of each question that corresponds to your personal information.

(1.) Year of Study							
□ 1. First-year □ 2. Second-year							
(2.) Gender							
\Box 1. Male \Box 2. Female							
(3.) Age							
□ 1. 21 - 25 years old □ 2. 26	6 - 30 years old						
□ 3. 31 - 35 years old □ 4. 36	6 - 40 years old						
□ 5. Above 40 years old							
(4.) Educational background							
□ 1. Business and Economics	□ 2. Arts						
□ 3. Engineering	□ 4. Science						
□ 5.Other							
(5.) Work status							
□ 1. Full-time employment	2. Business owner						
\Box 3. Family business	4. Full-time student						
□ 5. Other							
(6.) Work position							
□ 1. Administration staff	\Box 2. Accounting staff						
□ 3. Engineering staff	\Box 4. Sale and marketing staff						
□ 5. Owner	□ 6. Other						
(7.) What is your highest English	h language qualification?						
□ 1. TOEFL, score	2. IELTS, score						
□ 3. TOEIC, score	4. Other, score						
(8.) Do you speak a third langua	ige?						
\Box 1. No \Box 2. Yes, please specify							
(9.) What language do you speak most often?							
\Box 1. Thai \Box 2. Other, please specify							

Section II: Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)

This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with others in the following four communicative tasks: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking <u>when you are communicating in *Thai*.</u>

Please mark ☑ the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you: Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; are Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Researcher use only
		5	4	3	2	1	lese
	Group discussion		2			_	Ľ.
1	I dislike participating in group discussion	12					
2	Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.		3	2			
3	I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.	100	12				
4	I like to get involved in group discussions.		\$7				
5	Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.						
6	I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.						
	Meeting						
7	Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.						
8	Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.						
9	I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.						

	1		-	-	-	
10	I am afraid to express myself at meetings.					
11	Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.					
12	I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.					
	Interpersonal conversation					
13	While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.					
14	I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.					
15	Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.					
16	Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	N.	2			
17	While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.			2		
	Public speaking		1/1			
18	I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.	0				
19	I have no fear of giving a speech.					
20	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.					
21	I feel relaxed while giving a speech.					
22	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.					
23	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.					
	While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget					

Section II: Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)

This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with others in the following four communicative tasks: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking <u>when you are communicating in *English*</u>.

Please mark ☑ the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you: Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; are Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Researcher use only
	XXX())	5	4	3	2	1	lese
	Group discussion		2		r		œ
1	I dislike participating in group discussion	12					
2	Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.		3	2			
3	I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.		12				
4	I like to get involved in group discussions.	10	\$7				
5	Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.						
6	I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.						
	Meeting			,			
7	Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.						
8	Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.						
9	I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.						

	1			-	
10	I am afraid to express myself at meetings.				
11	Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.				
12	I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.				
	Interpersonal conversation				
13	While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.				
14	I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.				
15	Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.				
16	Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	N.	2		
17	While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.				
	Public speaking		1/1		
18	I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.	0			
19	I have no fear of giving a speech.				
20	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.				
21	I feel relaxed while giving a speech.				
22	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.				
23	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.				
24	While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.				

Method you generally use when coming across communication obstacle (Please specific NONE if you do not have any recommendation.)

Section III: Personal Information

The following set of information is depending upon your willing to answer. Please give information in the space provided.

Name-Surname (Optional):

Address (Optional):_____

Email Address (Optional):

Phone number (Optional): _____

Education Qualification (Optional):

Year of Learning in English Language (Optional):

Section IV: Calculate your CA score (Optional)

SCORING:

Group discussion: 18 - (scores for items 2, 4, & 6) + (scores for items 1, 3, & 5)

Meetings: 18 - (scores for items 8, 9, & 12) + (scores for items 7, 10, & 11)

Interpersonal: 18 - (scores for items 14, 16, & 17) + (scores for items 13, 15, & 18)

Public Speaking: 18 - (scores for items 19, 21, & 23) + (scores for items 20, 22, &24)

Group Discussion Score: _____

Interpersonal Score: _____

Meetings Score: _____

Public Speaking Score: _____

To obtain your total score for the PRCA, simply add your sub-scores together.

Scores can range from 24-120. Scores below 51 represent people who have very low CA. Scores between 51-80 represent people with average CA. Scores above 80 represent people who have high levels of trait CA.

NORMS FOR THE PRCA-24: (based on over 40,000 college students; data from over 3,000 non-student adults in a national sample provided virtually identical norms, within 0.20 for all scores.)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	High	Low
Total Score	65.6	15.3	> 80	< 51
Group:	15.4	4.8	> 20	< 11
Meeting:	16.4	4.2	> 20	< 13
Dyad :	14.2	3.9	> 18	< 11
Public:	19.3	5.1	> 24	< 14

- End of Questionnaire -

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

BIOGRAPHY

Name Date of Birth Educational Attainment

Work Position

Miss Sirinadda Kaweewattana December 16, 1986 Bachelor of Computer Science SIIT, Thammasat University Program Coordinator Thammasat Business School

