

Communication Apprehension among Thai University Students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classroom

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Abstract

This study primarily aimed to investigate the Communication Apprehension (CA) experienced by students at the Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna (RMUTL) Phitsanulok, Thailand in the context of their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. A total of 281 students from three faculties—Business Administration and Liberal Arts (BALA), Engineering (ENG), and Science and Agricultural Technology (SAT)—participated as respondents. Using a set of questionnaires for data collection, a quantitative statistical analysis was employed to derive meaningful insights. The outcomes unveiled a prevalent high level of CA among students in EFL classrooms, with responding to a teacher in English emerging as the most pronounced source of apprehension. Conversations also ranked as a highly anxiety-inducing context among the students who participated in the survey. The study identified reinforcement and modeling as the predominant factors contributing to the emergence of CA, wherein students' anxiety about speaking in an EFL classroom stems from a perceived lack of proficiency in English. Furthermore, students tend to avoid speaking situations in EFL classrooms due to concerns about potential judgment by classmates in the event of language mistakes. Noteworthy findings indicated that students in lower university year levels exhibited heightened apprehension compared to their counterparts in higher years. This study also revealed that students in the Faculty of SAT who take fewer English courses or subjects tend to experience greater apprehension compared to students in the other two mentioned faculties. Additionally, it was found that there is a positive correlation between lower grades in English and heightened CA. Lastly, students exhibited increased anxiety when engaging in oral communication with native-speaker teachers as opposed to their Asian counterparts.

Keywords: communication apprehension, EFL, anxiety in speaking

Introduction

Thailand, a nation where English is not the primary language, is faced with the imperative to acquire a second language due to international demands. EFL is integrated into the education system from early childhood to university, reflecting the influence of globalization. Despite concerted efforts to infuse more English into curricula (Ministry of Education, 2008) and the commencement of English instruction in primary school years (Sasum & Weeks, 2018), Thailand lags behind other non-English speaking countries in English proficiency. The Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index (2022), an organization that provides a classification of test takers' language abilities using the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR), ranks Thailand 97th out of 111 participating nations, earning a *very low proficiency* mark.

Among the English language skills, speaking receives limited emphasis in Thai schools, which predominantly concentrate on grammar and writing (Panthito, 2019). Consequently, Thai students may struggle to communicate effectively in real-life settings. Additionally, there is a prevailing perception among Thai learners that English is studied solely for tests (Khamprated, 2012). Research by Smith and Jones (2018) indicates variations in communication apprehension levels between rural and urban Thai students, attributed to distinct cultural contexts and educational environments.

McCroskey's (1977) comprehensive definition of CA as an individual's fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication serves as a foundational understanding. In the context of an EFL classroom, three of the identified settings—public speaking, group discussions, and conversation—become pertinent (Lahtinen, 2013). Recent studies, including those by Sato (2003), Crystal (2003), Zhang (2009), and recently, Sayan (2020), highlight the prevalence of communication apprehension among non-native students, particularly in countries like Thailand. Teacher-student dynamics also contribute to CA, with Duta et al. (2015) emphasizing the impact of teachers' speech, body language, and gestures on student communication. Additionally, past negative experiences, as explored by Liu (2007), where students were ridiculed for speaking English, can shape persistent apprehension towards speaking. Rimkeeratikul's (2017) observation of CA challenges among Thai graduate students underscores its pervasive nature, manifested in reluctance and the formation of alibis to avoid speaking in English classes.

This study aimed to investigate the CA of Thai university students in EFL classrooms, exploring its effects and relationships with triggering factors, ultimately contributing to the broader understanding of language anxiety in educational settings. Thus, this study would like to gather relevant answers to these questions:

Research Questions

1. What is the overall level of CA among Thai university students in EFL classes?
2. How do teacher-related, error-related, self and peer evaluations, and reinforcement and modeling contribute to CA in EFL classrooms?

3. Is there a significant difference in CA between 2nd-year and 3rd-year Thai university students in EFL classes?
4. How does the level of CA differ among Thai university students in EFL classes across the three (3) Faculties: Business Administration and Liberal Arts (BALA), Engineering (ENG), and Science and Agricultural Technology (SAT)?
5. How do the factors contributing to the emergence of CA relate to the socio-demographic characteristics of Thai university students in EFL classrooms?

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This research study is grounded in McCroskey's (2001) theory, which posits that CA involves fear or anxiety linked to real or anticipated communication with others. McCroskey and Daly (1984) categorically identify communication contexts, with a specific focus on CA. The previously stated study centers on four apprehension contexts: group discussion, meetings, public speaking, and conversations. To align with the study's objectives, group discussions and conversations were drawn from McCroskey (1982), while Lahtinen's (2013) concepts of answering in class and speaking in front of the class were integrated, replacing meetings and public speaking as the primary themes.

Additionally, this study adopts a model inspired by Lahtinen's (2013) research, which laid the groundwork for exploring the relationship between demographic factors and CA among students in EFL classrooms. Following Lahtinen's (2013) approach, this research investigates the correlation between CA, respondents' demographic profiles, and the factors influencing CA emergence among Thai university students in EFL classes. This methodological alignment enables a comprehensive examination of CA within the specified academic context.

Literature Review

Communication Apprehension

Language acquisition is a multifaceted process, and one critical factor that can impede progress is CA, wherein students experience anxiety about using a particular language. This phenomenon's adverse effects on language learning are underscored in Phillips' (1992) study, which emphasizes the negative impact of CA on acquiring and utilizing a language. Horwitz et al.'s (1986) seminal work explored anxiety in language classrooms, exploring the factors contributing to learners' anxiety and highlighting its detrimental effects on language acquisition. High levels of anxiety may lead learners to avoid class participation, hindering their overall language development.

Scholarly findings further substantiate the prevalence of CA. McCroskey (1976) contends that highly apprehensive students tend to avoid speech and public speaking courses altogether. Even if they enroll, they are likely to drop out before the first performance, regardless of course requirements. In

instances where students persist, severe problems may arise, ranging from absenteeism on speech days to outright refusal to speak, fainting, or attempting to escape the classroom (McCroskey, 1978).

Causes and Factors of Communication Apprehension

McCroskey and Betty (1998) learned that CA is a mental and internal phenomenon that is focused on someone's fear of communicating with others. Furthermore, Triandis (1994) viewed the cause from a cultural perspective and stated that CA in collectivistic cultures tends to be more pronounced than in individualistic cultures due to the emphasis on maintaining social harmony and prioritizing the collective goals of the group over individual objectives.

Socio-demographic characteristics like age, gender, education, and background are usually connected to CA. Butler et al. (2004) stated that differences in age, sex, and disparities in identified abilities can be some of the causes of CA. This is also supported by Alley-Young (2005) sharing that individual, social, cultural, and socio-economic factors can be the roots of CA.

Research by Duta et al. (2015) highlights the influential role of teachers in the development of CA among students. The study emphasizes that teachers need to be aware of how they communicate with students, as even non-verbal cues such as body language and gestures can affect students' CA. A teacher's demeanor, tone, and responsiveness to students' attempts at communication all contribute to the overall classroom atmosphere. Moreover, teachers who create a supportive and encouraging environment can help mitigate CA among students. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), language anxiety, including CA, can hinder students' willingness to communicate. Teachers who foster a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere can empower students to overcome their apprehension and actively participate in language learning activities. Teachers serve as significant contributors to students' CA levels. Being mindful of their communication style, creating a supportive classroom environment, and encouraging student participation are essential strategies for mitigating CA among learners (Duta et al., 2015; Horwitz et al., 1986; McCroskey, 2001).

CA in educational settings is often influenced by various factors, and among them are error-related elements. The fear of making mistakes or being judged for language errors can significantly impact students' willingness to communicate in a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986). The educational context, particularly in EFL classrooms, can create an environment where students may feel a heightened sense of anxiety due to concerns about linguistic accuracy. Research by Wongthodsaporn (2012) among undergraduate students in Thailand revealed that limited knowledge of grammatical structures and anxiety related to speaking English were significant factors discouraging students from engaging in English conversations. This underscores the impact of error-related factors on CA in EFL settings. Beyond error-related concerns, the process of self-evaluation and peer evaluations also plays a crucial role in shaping CA. The fear of being negatively evaluated by oneself or peers can contribute to heightened anxiety levels in communicative situations. Studies by McCroskey (1976) suggested that individuals with high CA tend to avoid speech courses and public speaking

opportunities due to the fear of negative evaluations. The fear of being judged by peers can create a significant barrier to effective communication in both formal and informal settings. Moreover, the role of self-evaluation becomes evident in the study of Lahtinen (2013), which explored the relationship between demographic factors and CA levels. Students who engage in negative self-evaluation may experience higher levels of apprehension, impacting their overall communication performance.

In addition to self-evaluation, peer evaluations can contribute to the complexity of CA. Some findings in Yusica's (2014) paper indicated that Thai students often avoid interaction in a foreign language, fearing negative peer evaluations. The perception of being laughed at or judged by classmates for language mistakes can intensify communication anxiety, creating a significant hurdle in the language learning process.

Another key factor contributing to the emergence of CA is reinforcement, a process by which certain behaviors are strengthened or weakened based on the consequences that follow them (Skinner, 1938). In the educational context, reinforcement can either alleviate or exacerbate CA among students. Positive reinforcement, such as encouraging and supportive feedback, has been shown to reduce anxiety levels and enhance students' willingness to communicate (Horwitz, 2001).

Modeling, another influential factor in the development of CA, refers to the process of observing and imitating the behaviors of others (Bandura & Walters, 1963). In the context of EFL classrooms, the behavior and communication style of teachers and peers play a crucial role in shaping students' CA levels. Research by Liu and Jackson (2008) demonstrated that students who observed their peers being ridiculed for language mistakes experienced increased CA. This emphasizes the importance of a supportive and non-judgmental environment to mitigate the negative impact of modeling on students' apprehension. Moreover, Lahtinen's (2013) work, which focused on the relationship between demographic factors and CA levels, indicated that the modeling of communication behaviors by teachers could significantly influence students' anxiety levels. Teachers who exhibit effective communication skills and provide positive modeling can contribute to a more supportive learning environment.

Reinforcement and modeling are critical components influencing the emergence of CA among students in EFL classrooms. Positive reinforcement and supportive modeling contribute to the reduction of anxiety, fostering a conducive atmosphere for effective communication. Conversely, negative reinforcement and detrimental modeling can intensify CA, emphasizing the need for educators to adopt strategies that promote positive learning experiences.

Communication Apprehension of Thai Students

Thailand, with its rich cultural heritage and growing global connections, acknowledges the crucial role of the English language in promoting international communication and economic growth. English language education is prioritized within the Thai curriculum to equip students with essential linguistic skills. However, despite the emphasis on formal English language learning, persistent

challenges hinder effective language exposure. According to a study by Yutdhana and Wattanatorn (2015), many Thai college students face considerable communication apprehension (CA) when required to speak English, especially in formal settings like classrooms or in front of their peers.

The challenges faced by Thai learners in gaining sufficient English language exposure are complex. While classroom instruction is essential, it often falls short of providing authentic language experiences. Socio-economic backgrounds also influence exposure outside the classroom, with limited access to English media, study materials, and environments for language practice contributing to the issue. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing targeted strategies to enhance English language exposure among Thai learners.

Yusica (2014) emphasized in her research that Thai students tend to avoid interaction in a foreign language, including English, even when exposed to electronic and paper media. This reluctance to engage in spoken English activities, observed in many Thai learners, poses a significant challenge to their language development, hindering their ability to express themselves confidently in English.

Furthermore, Ouamcheep's (2012) study, which examined CA among 66 Master of Arts in English for Careers (MEC) students at the Language Institute, Thammasat University, illustrated a moderate level of CA. The study also identified a moderate-level relationship between CA and self-esteem. Regarding gender differences, research findings vary, with some studies suggesting females report more anxiety about speaking a foreign or second language (Ozturk & Gurbuz, 2012), while others find males reporting higher anxiety levels (Gerencheal, 2016). Understanding these nuances is crucial for addressing CA and promoting effective language learning experiences among Thai students.

Methodology

This part of the study is segmented into four areas including the respondents, the instruments used, the methods of data gathering, and the analyses after the data were gathered.

Respondents of the Study

The total population (N) was 948 second-year and third-year undergraduate students who enrolled in minor English classes such as GEBLC 101—English for Communication, GEBLC 102—English for Life Skills, and GEBLC 103—Academic English, and other English subjects from the three faculties of the Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Phitsanulok, namely the Faculty of Business Administration and Liberal Arts (BALA), the Faculty of Engineering (ENG), and the Faculty of Sciences and Agricultural Technology (SAT) in Academic Years 2021–2022. To get an equal distribution of respondents from each faculty, stratified sampling was employed. The main advantage of stratified random sampling is that it captures key population characteristics in the sample. This method of sampling produces characteristics in the sample that are proportional to the overall population. Consequently, 281 respondents (n) participated in this study. They were in their second year

and third year at RMUTL Phitsanulok. All of the respondents had enrolled in the three minor English subjects at the university.

Table 1

Number of Respondents

Faculty	N	n
BALA	226	67
ENG	322	96
SAT	400	118
TOTAL	948	281

Research Instruments

A set of questionnaires, which includes statements asking for the respondents' demographic profiles, and questions regarding CA on foreign language communication, was employed as the instrument that was used in this study denoting a quantitative approach. The set of questionnaires was divided into three parts as follows:

Part 1. The first part of the questionnaire comprised basic background questions to gather information about the respondents. The respondents were asked to fill out information regarding their age, gender, average grade in English, and types of instructors in their English subjects. For types of instructors, they were asked to answer if they had enrolled in a class with native-English-speaking instructors (nationalities from the USA, UK, New Zealand, Australia), near-native English-speaking instructors (nationalities from the Philippines), and non-native English-speaking instructors (nationalities from Thailand). They were also asked to indicate their year level and faculty. In addition, lectures with native and near-native English-speaking instructors deliver classes in English while with non-native English-speaking instructors deliver their English classes bilingually, in English and Thai.

Part 2. The second part of the questionnaire was derived from McCroskey's (1970) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24) which consists of 24 statements related to CA. The total scores of CA can be acquired by adding the scores in each context together. To compute the sub-scores for four communication contexts: group discussions (items 1 to 6), meetings (items 7 to 12), conversations (items 13 to 18), and public speaking (items 19 to 24), the scores are added or subtracted for each feature as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Group Discussions} &= 18 + (\text{scores for items 2, 4, \& 6}) - (\text{scores for items 1, 3, \& 5}) \\
 \text{Meetings} &= 18 + (\text{scores for items 8, 9, \& 12}) - (\text{scores for items 7, 10, \& 11}) \\
 \text{Conversations} &= 18 + (\text{scores for items 14, 16, \& 17}) - (\text{scores for items 13, 15, \& 18}) \\
 \text{Public Speaking} &= 18 + (\text{scores for items 19, 21, \& 23}) - (\text{scores for items 20, 22, \& 24}) \\
 \text{Total Scores} &= \text{Group Discussions} + \text{Meetings} + \text{Conversations} + \text{Public Speaking}
 \end{aligned}$$

Each of the contexts is represented by six items. Some changes were made in symmetry with the theoretical framework of the study, and modeled with Lahtinen's (2013) questionnaire, where communication contexts were emphasized in a classroom setting and EFL which brought closer to the university students' life experiences inside a classroom. This paper's questionnaire was presented as follows:

1. The meetings category was changed to answering the teacher in English. The meeting context was not done regularly by the students. Also, in meetings, most likely, students would prefer to use their mother tongue. As a replacement, answering the teacher in English was used. This is more highly identifiable to the students (Lahtinen, 2013).

2. The public speaking category was renamed as speaking in front of the class in English individually. The term *public speaking* has been modified to *speaking in front of the class in English* as they essentially convey the same concept (Lahtinen, 2013).

The internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha as proof that the items in this part that were adopted were reliable with an overall rating of 0.83 (good).

Meanwhile, here is the interpretation of the total scores:

A low level of CA can be categorized by total scores below 51. Moderate CA falls within the range of 51 to 80, while high CA is indicated by total scores exceeding 80 (McCroskey, 1970). Furthermore, for each communication context, the sub-scores are outlined as follows:

	High	Low
Group Discussions	>20	<11
Answering the Teacher in English	>20	<13
Conversations	>18	<11
Speaking English in front of the Class	>24	<14

Part 3. The third part of the questionnaire consisted of given factors that contribute to the emergence of CA among the respondents. It was adopted from the study of Lahtinen (2013). This part of the questionnaire contained 27 statements, and they were divided into four types of factors.

The identified factors are categorized into distinct sets, each shedding light on specific influences within the realm of CA. The first set, aptly labeled as teacher-related factors, encompasses elements that exhibit a direct or indirect association with the teacher, encompassing their characteristics and class management style. The second set examines error-related factors, focusing on instances where individuals perceive evidence of mistakes and errors in English language expression, directly or indirectly linked to CA. Moving to the third set, evaluations, the questionnaire items explore situations involving self-evaluations and peer evaluations. Lastly, the fourth set, termed reinforcement and modeling, acts as an umbrella term covering diverse scenarios within the foreign language classroom environment that contribute to shaping the overall atmosphere (Molnar & Crnjak, 2018).

Finally, a 5-point Likert scale was employed to assess the respondents' perceptions regarding the factors contributing to the emergence of their CA.

The respondents expressed their agreement through the following options: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1) in response to the 27 statements. The internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha, demonstrating the reliability of the adopted items, with an overall rating of 0.81, signifying a good level of reliability.

Data Collection

The set of questionnaires was distributed to and collected from all the respondents between May 2 and 20, 2022. They filled out the questionnaire and returned it to the lecturer-in-charge of their classroom, and the researchers collected all of them.

After the data were all gathered from the respondents of this study, they were analyzed accordingly.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were calculated using SPSS 20 to get the mean scores, Standard Deviation (SD), and percentages. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Spearman Rank, and Cramer's V correlations were also employed to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Results, Discussion, and Implications

This part of the study presents the results and findings based on the research questions. Discussion appears after each result together with the implications of the findings of the study.

Part 1. Results of the Demographic Profiles among the Respondents

Table 2

Respondents' Profiles: Age and Gender

Profiles	Frequency n = 281	Percent
Age		
20	165	58.72
21	109	38.79
22	5	1.78
23	1	0.36
24	1	0.36
Gender		
male	133	47.33
female	148	52.67

Table 2 illustrates the age and gender profiles of the respondents. Among the total 281 respondents in the study, the majority of them are 20 at 58.72%. There were 38.79% who were 21 years old, and the remaining 2.5% were from the age range 22–24. The average age was 20.45 with an SD of 0.59 years.

Figure 1

Distribution of Respondents by Year Level in University

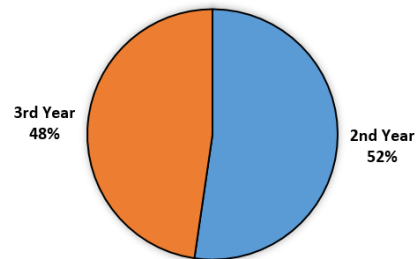


Figure 2

Distribution of Respondents by Faculty

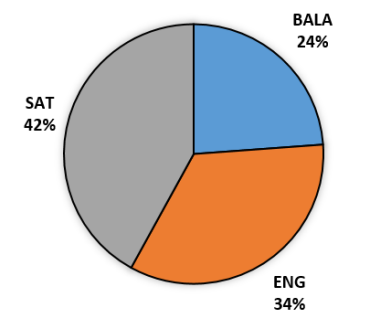


Table 3

Respondents' Profiles: English Average Grade and Instructor

Profiles	Frequency n = 281	Percent
Average grade in English in university		
50 - 60	56	19.93
61 - 70	156	55.52
71 - 80	66	23.49
81 - 90	3	1.07
Instructor in English subject		
native English speaker	63	22.42
near-native English speaker	139	49.47
non-native English speaker	79	28.11

As shown in Figure 1, more third-year students participated in the study than second-year students. Fifty-two percent (52%) of the chart is from the third-year level whereas 48% represents the second-year level.

The majority of the respondents who participated in the study came from the Faculty of SAT at 42% followed by the Faculty of ENG at 34%, and the Faculty of BALA at 24%.

According to Table 3, the average grade in English in the university among the respondents is 66.62 (SD = 7.80). Moreover, 49.47% of the respondents have studied with near-native English-speaking instructors, 28.11% of them have studied with non-native English-speaking instructors, and 22.42% of them have studied with native English-speaking instructors.

Part 2. Results and Discussions of the CA of the Respondents

Table 4 presents a comprehensive overview of the respondents' CA, revealing an overall high-level CA with a total score of 80.73. Furthermore, scores from the four contexts can range from a low of 6 to a high of 30. By examining the mean scores across different contexts, answering the teacher in English garnered a high level of CA, and also emerged as the most anxiety-inducing scenario with a score of 23.21. Conversations are also at a high level of CA with a score of 20.33. Speaking English in front of the class and group discussions exhibited a relatively moderate level of CA among respondents, with sub scores of 22.17 and 15.02 respectively.

Table 4

Communication Apprehension of the Respondents

Contexts	Scores	Level
Group discussion	15.02	Moderate
Answering the teacher in English	23.21	High
Conversations	20.33	High
Speaking in front of the class in English	22.17	Moderate
Total	80.73	High

Ahmad (2021) noted in his research that students frequently hesitated to engage in speaking activities, particularly when responding to a teacher's question, aligning with the findings of this study. Krishnamoorthy's (2019) review highlighted the prevalence of CA when learners speak in front of their teachers. Consistent with Lahtinen's (2013) study on non-native English-speaking students, answering a teacher in English demonstrated a high level of CA in this study. However, speaking in front of an EFL classroom, a context known for inducing high levels of anxiety, surprisingly revealed only a moderate level of CA among respondents. This contradicts the observations of Yusica (2014), who found that Thai students experience panic and impaired thinking when speaking English in class due to CA.

In a study by Akkakoson (2016), negative feedback about English conversation was rated low, yet the results emphasized that English speaking or conversation could induce anxiety. In contrast, this study's findings indicated a high level of CA in conversation scenarios. Hasni et al. (2019) asserted the significance of CA in group discussions, noting that it should not be trivialized. Their study, symmetrical with the present one, identified a high level of CA in group discussions, underscoring its significance in the classroom setting.

Part 3. Results and Discussion of the Contributing Factors to the Emergence of CA

Table 5

Teacher-Related Issues as Contributing Factors to the Emergence of CA

Teacher-Related	Mean	Interpretation
a. It is difficult to understand everything the teacher says in English in class	4.58	Strongly agree
b. I feel the teacher has such a high status and authority	3.99	Agree
c. It irritates me when I think of the teacher's corrections of my English	3.99	Agree
d. The teacher is so demanding	3.94	Agree
e. I think the teacher thinks I am a poor student.	2.82	Neither agree nor disagree
f. I think the teacher is also apprehensive about speaking English	1.68	Strongly disagree
g. I hate the teacher	1.33	Strongly disagree
Overall Mean	3.19	Neither agree nor disagree

In the domain of teacher-related factors contributing to the manifestation of CA in their EFL classrooms, respondents expressed ambivalence with a mean score of 3.19. Notably, respondents strongly concurred that they are prone to experiencing CA when they find it *difficult to understand everything the teacher says in English in class*, garnering a robust mean score of 4.58.

This suggests that students might feel apprehensive in EFL classes, particularly when faced with challenges in comprehending their teachers' instructions or explanations in English. While the presence of teachers can influence students' CA, as indicated in the study by Khamprated (2012), it is crucial to emphasize that this apprehension is not inherently linked to disliking their English teachers. The study reveals a significant association between teachers and CA, yet respondents strongly disagreed with the notion that they harbor a dislike for their English teachers.

For the error-related set of factors which garnered a 3.46 mean rating, the respondents agreed that this set of factors contributed to the emergence of their CA. Furthermore, the respondents strongly agreed that they are *afraid of making mistakes* with the highest mean at a strongly agree level, 4.88, among all the other items in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the respondents also strongly agreed that they *rarely practice speaking English* and they are *unsure that what they are about to say may be correct or wrong*, and these could bring out their CA, with mean ratings of 4.67 and 4.36 respectively.

Interestingly, the result in this part is that the students regarded their fear of committing mistakes while speaking English which has caused them to develop CA. A few years ago, Yusica (2014) clearly stated in her research study that Thai students mostly avoid foreign language interaction. Furthermore, the study showed that Thai university students tend to adopt negative thinking about English because they are anxious when they commit mistakes. In the independent study of Benjakomwattana (2016) about the speaking competence of students of RMUTL Phitsanulok, the same university where the present study was conducted, he directly stated that due to the students' fear of committing a mistake in their pronunciation and grammar, structure, they tend to avoid communication inside an EFL classroom.

Table 6

Error-related Issues as Factors Contributing to the Emergence of CA in an EFL Classroom

Error-related	Mean	Interpretation
1. I am afraid of making mistakes	4.88	Strongly agree
2. I rarely practice speaking English	4.67	Strongly agree
3. I am unsure that what I am about to say may be correct or wrong	4.36	Strongly agree
4. I demand perfect performance from myself	2.45	Disagree
5. I am afraid of the teacher pointing out mistakes or deficiencies in my speech	2.25	Disagree
6. I feel like the others want to see me make mistakes or fail	2.13	Disagree
Overall Mean	3.46	Agree

Table 7

Evaluations of Self and Others Contributing to the Emergence of CA in an EFL Classroom

Evaluation of self/others	Mean	Interpretation
a. I think I speak English poorly as well as the others	4.88	Strongly agree
b. I am embarrassed to speak English in class	4.81	Strongly agree
c. There are so many others in the classroom who listen to me speaking in English	4.50	Strongly agree
d. I just belong to those who are not good at languages	4.48	Strongly agree
e. I am afraid the other students will laugh at me	4.24	Strongly Agree
f. I am afraid that the others will notice my nervousness	3.93	Agree
	3.14	Neither agree
g. I believe my conversation partner speaks English better than I do		nor disagree
		Neither agree
h. I have a very little trust to my skills as an English speaker	3.10	nor disagree
i. I think the other students are better at speaking English than I am	2.16	Disagree
j. My expectations of speaking English in school are negative	2.12	Disagree
Overall Mean	3.74	Agree

When the respondents were asked about the overall evaluation of themselves and others, they agreed that this particular set of factors could affect their CA with a mean score of 3.74.

Upon answering the statements in this part, the respondents strongly agreed that they speak English poorly as well as the other students with a mean score of 4.88. It was followed by the factors *I am embarrassed to speak in class* and *There are so many others in the classroom who listen to me speaking in English*, with strong agreement garnering the means of 4.81 and 4.50, respectively. All of the previously mentioned statements earned a very high level of agreement that they could be factors in the emergence of CA among the respondents. Meanwhile, a few respondents disagreed with the ideas *My expectations of speaking English in school are negative* and *I think the other students are better at speaking English than I am* with mean ratings of 2.12 and 2.16 respectively.

Based on the results in this category, the respondents feel apprehensive about speaking English in an EFL classroom because they think they do not speak English even their classmates. Also, due to the reason that many students in the class listen to them speaking in English, the respondents tend to experience CA. Previous studies indicated that Thai university students have this cognitive distortion thinking that they are not good at the English language. The study of Sankuena and Sucaromana (2018) revealed that students experienced CA at an average level due to fear of negative evaluation, thus their anxiety has a significant impact on the EFL classroom. Paralleled to the results of this study, we can assume that negative self-talk and cognitive distortion thinking that the student's classmates and peers are also not good in the English language so they develop this kind of fear causing them to shun or evade speaking in any situations in an EFL classroom.

Table 8

Reinforcement and Modeling as Factors Contributing to the Emergence of CA in an EFL Classroom

	Reinforcement/modeling	Mean	Interpreted Level
a.	The other students rarely speak English in class	4.88	Strongly agree
b.	I think the teacher will give negative feedback about my English speech	4.81	Strongly agree
c.	I feel the teacher is not giving me enough encouraging feedback	3.93	Agree
d.	I have received so much negative feedback in EFL classes	2.12	Disagree
	Overall Mean	3.94	Agree

Table 8 reveals that reinforcement and modeling earned the highest agreement as a set of factors that contribute to the emergence of their CA. It received an overall 3.94 mean score. *The other students rarely speak English in class*, earning a mean of 4.88 with a very strong level of agreement among the respondents thinking that this affects their anxiety in speaking.

Wanich (2014) concluded in his study that Thai students struggle to speak English because they don't have a lot of opportunities to speak the language. Furthermore, students don't want to speak in

the classroom context because they acknowledge that their classmates are not proficient enough to respond.

Table 9

The Overall Ranking and Mean of Factors Contributing to the Emergence of CA in an EFL Classroom

Factors	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
a. Teacher-related	3.19	Neither agree nor disagree	4
b. Error-related	3.46	Agree	3
c. Evaluation of self/others	3.74	Agree	2
d. Reinforcement/modeling	3.94	Agree	1
Overall Mean	3.76	Agree	

In the results on the factors that contribute to the emergence of CA in an EFL classroom, reinforcement and modeling garnered the highest mean rating at 3.94 followed by evaluation of self and others with a 3.74 mean rating, then error-related issues with a 3.46 mean rating, and lastly, teacher-related issues got the lowest rank and mean rating of 3.19.

In summary, CA among the students predominantly stems from reinforcement and modeling. This finding aligns with Khamprated's (2012) study, where Thai vocational students expressed anxiety and fear when speaking English in class due to the potential for ridicule from their peers. Similar results were obtained by Liu and Jackson (2008), who highlighted the impact of being laughed at, regardless of the correctness of English usage, on students' CA. This reflects the outcomes of the present study. Furthermore, the respondents' belief that they and their peers do not speak English proficiently contributes to their apprehension in engaging in spoken communication in an EFL class. Additionally, the evaluation by others significantly influences the development of CA among Thai students.

Part 4. Results and Discussions of the CA between the 2nd Year and 3rd Year Students

Table 10

Comparison of CA between the 2nd and 3rd Year Students

Context	Mean rating		Mean difference	t value	p-value
	3rd year	2nd year			
Group discussion	3.42	3.44	-0.02	-0.525	0.600
Answering the teacher in English	3.29	3.39	-0.10	-3.068*	0.002
Conversation	3.59	3.57	0.02	0.586	0.559
Speaking in front of the class	3.00	2.99	0.01	0.350	0.726

Note: * significant at 5% level (2-tailed)

The results of an independent sample t-test are reported in Table 10. The t-test assessed potential significant differences in CA between 2nd and 3rd-year Thai university students. The four context-related CA scores presented in the table indicate an average rating. Given that the comparison involves two distinct groups, the independent sample T-test emerged as the most suitable statistical test. Specifically, the results reveal that CA, particularly concerning answering the teacher in English, is higher among 2nd-year Thai university students compared to their 3rd-year counterparts.

Interpreting the findings, it becomes evident that 2nd-year undergraduate students exhibit elevated levels of CA in contrast to their 3rd-year counterparts. Exposure to the English language appears to play a crucial role in enhancing students' receptiveness to learning. This observation aligns with the study conducted by Marchessault and Larwin (2014) as they examined CA among different year levels and ages of learners. Their study found that younger students and those in lower year levels tend to exhibit higher levels of communication apprehension compared to older students and those in higher year levels. This suggests that experience and maturity may help reduce CA over time.

Part 5. Results of the CA of the Students in the Three Faculties

Table 11

Comparison of the Respondents' Communication Apprehension among the Three Faculties

Context-related	Mean rating			F-value	p-value
	BALA	ENG	SAT		
Group discussion	3.38	3.43	3.45	0.88	0.415 ^{ns}
Answering the teacher in English	3.25 ^b	3.35 ^a	3.38 ^a	4.63	0.011*
Speaking in front of the class	3.06 ^a	2.95 ^b	3.03 ^a	7.41	0.001*
Conversation	3.64 ^a	3.58 ^{ab}	3.54 ^b	3.13	0.045*
TOTAL	3.33	3.28	3.35		

Note * significant at 5% level (2-tailed). ^{ns} no significant difference.

The four context-related CA scores presented in Table 11 exhibit an average mean rating. Given that three groups (Faculties of BALA, ENG, and SAT) were compared, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was deemed the most appropriate test to assess any differences in CA among these faculties. Employing a 5% level of significance and testing the null hypothesis of no difference, the results indicate that for the three context-based CA factors [answering the teacher in English, $F_{(3,278)} = 4.63$, $p < 0.05$; speaking in front of the class, $F_{(3,278)} = 7.41$, $p < 0.05$; and conversation, $F_{(3,278)} = 3.13$, $p < 0.05$], the p-values are less than 0.05. This implies a significant difference among the three faculty groups.

Subsequent analysis using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) method was also employed to identify significant group differences among the three faculties. Table 11 indicates that students from

the Faculty of BALA exhibit lower CA when answering the teacher in English compared to the Faculties of ENG and SAT. Additionally, students from the Faculties of BALA and SAT share an almost equal level of CA when speaking in front of the class, both of which are significantly higher compared to the Faculty of ENG. Notably, Table 11 indicates that students in the Faculty of BALA have significantly higher conversation apprehension (CA) than students in the Faculty of SAT, while the mean score of students in the Faculty of ENG overlaps with those of the Faculties of BALA and SAT, indicating no significant difference from either.

These findings align with Benjakomwatthana's (2016) independent study, which uncovered a higher level of CA among students from the Faculties of SAT and ENG compared to those in the Faculty of BALA. This discrepancy may be attributed to greater English exposure among students majoring in English and Business within the Faculty of BALA.

Part 6. Results and Discussions of the Relationship between the Respondents' CA, and Their Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Table 12

Correlation Analysis between the Respondents' CA and the Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Socio-demographic profiles	Communication Apprehension			
	Group discussion	Answering the teacher in English	Conversation	Speaking in front of the class
Age ^a	0.08	-0.19*	0.03	0.05
Faculty ^b	0.32*	0.15*	0.18*	0.17*
Average Grade in English in university ^a	0.29*	0.31*	-0.13*	-0.19*
Instructor in English subject ^b	0.09	0.16	0.15*	0.11

Notes ^a Spearman rank correlation coefficient, ^b Cramer's V coefficient, * Correlation is significant at a 5% level (2-tailed)

Table 12 employs two correlation analyses to examine relationships between variables. Spearman rank correlation assesses the strength of the direct relationship between two ordinal variables, while Cramer's V coefficient determines the strength of the relationship between nominal and ordinal variables. The CA in this table is measured on an ordinal scale, utilizing the nominal equivalence of each mean rating.

Spearman rank correlation tests the relationship between age and CA. A negative weak relationship ($r_s = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$) emerges between age and answering the teacher in English, indicating that younger students are more apprehensive about responding to the teacher in English.

In examining the relationship between faculty and CA, Cramer's V coefficient reveals a very strong relationship ($\phi = 0.32$, $p < 0.05$) between the faculty of the students and their CA in group

discussions. Additionally, a strong relationship exists between the faculty to which the students belong and CA in answering the teacher in English ($\phi = 0.15, p < 0.05$), speaking in front of the class ($\phi = 0.17, p < 0.05$), and conversation ($\phi = 0.18, p < 0.05$). This indicates that the faculty significantly affects CA in these contexts.

Regarding the relationship between the student's average grades in English and CA, the Spearman rank correlation indicates a moderate relationship ($r_s = 0.31, p < 0.05$) in answering the teacher in English, and a similar pattern ($r_s = 0.29, p < 0.05$) in group discussions. Higher average grades in English correlate with lower CA. Additionally, there are negative weak relationships between average grades in English and CA in speaking in front of the class ($r_s = -0.19, p < 0.05$) and conversations ($r_s = -0.13, p < 0.05$). Lower grades correspond to higher CA in these contexts, aligning with Homhual's (2015) findings.

The relationship between types of instructors and CA among Thai university students was tested using Cramer's V coefficient. A moderate relationship ($\phi = 0.15, p < 0.05$) is found in conversation, indicating a higher tendency for the students to fear speaking in English when conversing with native English speakers. In Turkey, Bozavli and Gulmez (2012) found similar results regarding higher CA levels among learners in native-English (teacher) speaker classes compared to non-native (teacher) English speaker classes. Khamprated (2012) in Thailand also reported similar findings, stating that Thai EFL learners have more concerns about speaking in front of native-English speakers due to perceived inadequacies in grammar and speaking skills.

Table 13

Correlation Analysis between the Respondents' CA and the Contributing Factors to the CA Emergence

Factors	Group discussion	Context-related CA		
		Answering the teacher in English	Speaking in front of the class	Conversation
Teacher-related	-0.039	0.121*	-0.004	0.046
Error-related	0.092	0.226*	-0.038	-0.03
Evaluation of self/others	-0.313*	-0.236*	0.091	0.164*
Reinforcement/modeling	-0.22*	-0.134*	0.096	0.016

Note Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used. * Correlation is significant at a 5% level (2-tailed)

Spearman rank correlation was used in determining the relationship between the respondents' CA in different contexts and the factors contributing to the emergence of CA in an EFL classroom. Table 13 shows that there is a negative moderate relationship between CA on group discussion and the factors evaluation of self and others ($r_s = -0.31, p < 0.05$) and reinforcement and modeling ($r_s = -0.22, p < 0.05$). It can be denoted that the more the students have lower self-esteem and even think negatively

that others may judge them when they speak, the higher they have CA in group discussions. In the context of answering teacher in English, it was found that it had significant relationships to all the factors that contribute to their CA. A weak relationship signifies between answering a teacher in English and teacher-related CA ($r_s = 0.12, p < 0.05$) and a moderate relationship signifies between answering a teacher in English and error-related factor ($r_s = 0.23, p < 0.05$). However, a negative weak relationship could be found between answering a teacher in English and reinforcement and modeling ($r_s = -0.13, p < 0.05$), and a weak moderate relationship could be found between answering questions and evaluation of self and others.

The primary aim of this study is to assess the level of CA among Thai university students within their EFL classrooms. Additionally, the study seeks to raise awareness about the prevalent issues related to CA within this educational context. Presenting the results and findings of this research is intended to inform both teachers and students about the existence of CA in Thai university EFL classrooms. The impact of this research is particularly pertinent for teachers, providing insights on how to address students experiencing anxiety when speaking in the classroom.

Moreover, the outcomes of this study can serve as a valuable reference for educators, especially at the primary level. It is intended to guide them in developing strategies and techniques to alleviate anxiety among young learners during their formative years. This proactive approach aims to equip students with essential life skills, enabling them to manage and reduce their fears, particularly in the context of public speaking.

Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

Thai university students who participated in this study exhibit high and significant anxiety when it comes to speaking in EFL classrooms. Their apprehension is particularly pronounced when responding to teachers in English and delivering speeches in front of their EFL peers. The influence of reinforcement and modeling significantly contributes to the heightened fear of speaking in the EFL classroom among the students. Notably, their anxiety intensifies as they perceive themselves as inadequately proficient in the language, particularly in oral expression. Moreover, the study reveals moderately high relationships between various factors contributing to the emergence of CA among the students, underscoring the interconnected nature of these influences within the EFL classroom environment.

The findings highlighting the high and significant anxiety levels among Thai university students in speaking EFL classrooms have crucial implications for language education in Thailand. Firstly, recognizing and addressing this anxiety is paramount for educators and institutions aiming to create a supportive and conducive learning environment. Strategies that focus on reducing apprehension when answering teachers or speaking in front of the class are essential to enhancing students' oral communication skills.

The identified influence of reinforcement and modeling on students' apprehensiveness emphasizes the importance of pedagogical approaches that foster positive reinforcement and provide effective language modeling. Language educators should design instructional methods that encourage students to engage actively in English communication, promoting a gradual reduction in anxiety levels. Incorporating activities that build confidence, such as role-playing and group discussions, can be instrumental in mitigating the fear of speaking English in an EFL setting.

Furthermore, the perception of not being well-versed in oral English as a factor contributing to increased fear underscores the need for interventions targeting language proficiency development. Language programs and curricula should prioritize speaking and listening skills, offering opportunities for consistent practice and improvement. By addressing these factors and cultivating a supportive language learning environment, educators can contribute to minimizing CA among Thai university students, ultimately fostering more effective language acquisition and communication competence in EFL classrooms.

This study underscores a noteworthy correlation between students' CA levels and their university year levels. Based on the findings of this study, they suggest that students in lower university years exhibit higher levels of CA compared to their counterparts in higher years. Furthermore, a significant association emerges between students' English course participation and apprehension levels, indicating that those who enroll in fewer English courses tend to experience more CA than their counterparts with more extensive exposure to English subjects in their curricula.

The study also reveals a compelling relationship between English grades and CA among Thai university students. As English grades decrease, there is a corresponding increase in CA levels. Notably, the research highlights a nuanced dimension related to teacher interactions, indicating that students tend to experience heightened anxiety when speaking or interacting orally with native-speaker teachers compared to their interactions with Asian teachers. These nuanced insights provide valuable considerations for educators and policymakers aiming to address CA effectively and tailor interventions to specific factors influencing student anxiety levels in a university setting. Furthermore, the anxiety associated with speaking in an academic context can have significant implications for students' academic English skills. CA may hinder students' ability to articulate their thoughts and ideas effectively, impacting both their verbal and written communication skills.

This study was limited only to CA and the factors that contribute to the emergence of communication apprehension among Thai university 2nd and 3rd-year students and the different contexts wherein CA is likely to be present in three different faculties. It is therefore suggested to explore more into the level of CA among students in their first or last year in the university. Furthermore, it is encouraged to get more information from teachers regarding the subject matter in the next studies whether they will be analyzed quantitatively or qualitatively to know the other sides of this issue called comprehension apprehension. It may be interesting to do a qualitative case study or some action

research on this topic to get some richer descriptions of what is causing anxiety for students who identify as having significant CA.

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