Differences in Thai Students' Anxiety When Speaking English in Onsite and Online Classrooms

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Received: Oct 22, 2023 *Revised: Feb 1, 2024* *Accepted: Feb 11, 2024*

Abstract

Speaking English in a face-to-face classroom versus an online classroom may make EFL students feel uneasy in different ways, depending on a variety of factors. To help students reduce anxiety, teachers must understand the different levels of anxiety they experience in different situations. This study investigated the differences in English-speaking anxiety between face-to-face and an online classroom for Thai students, and used questionnaires and structured interviews to identify the factors that may contribute to the anxiety of different students. The questionnaire was completed by 26 first-year undergraduates from a Thai public university who had both face-to-face and online classroom experience in order to compare anxiety levels in the two learning environments. Seven students were then interviewed in order to determine the factors that may have contributed to these differences. The data from the questionnaire were presented as mean scores and standard deviation (SD) in order to compare the differences in students' anxiety between on-site and online classrooms, whereas the data from the interviews were used to explain the factors that could cause these differences. The results of the questionnaire revealed that, with the exception of confidence, students' speaking anxiety in face-to-face classrooms is greater in every respect than in online classrooms. In the meantime, the results of the interviews revealed that nervousness, a limited vocabulary, and an inability to remember vocabulary could be significant contributors to anxiety differences. The discussion explained how each aspect and factor makes speaking anxiety in on-site classrooms greater than in online classrooms, and suggested and encouraged teachers to reduce students' anxiety in both types of classrooms. Teachers can improve the language learning outcomes of their students by creating a less stressful environment in the English classroom and by incorporating activities that motivate or engage students to practice speaking.

Keywords: anxiety, online classroom, onsite classroom, speaking English, Thailand

Introduction

Though speaking, listening, reading, and writing are all equally important when learning a language, learners often prioritize speaking because it is the primary skill they utilize for

communication, including exchanging ideas or thoughts (Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2021). However, there may be difficulties in learning English in some nations, including Thailand, where English is not a national language, yet learners must still learn it to be able to understand and communicate with English speakers from other countries. However, when learners encounter difficulties that hinder them from speaking or communicating with English speakers, they can feel embarrassed, frustrated, or even devastated, which can even eventually traumatize them. Therefore, learners' difficulties need to be addressed.

English learners in Thailand might find that practicing speaking is quite a challenge due to the lack of opportunities to interact with foreigners and the fact that Thai is the dominant language. Nowadays, even though many students are able to study in an English program in Thai schools and have learned English as a second language for several years, this does not mean that every student can speak English fluently, due to factors such as language barriers which relate to language components such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency; the learning environment which is related to lecturers, peers, and topics of speaking modules; and psychological factors which consist of attitude, lack of motivation, and anxiety (Abrar et al., 2018). Although there are various significant factors that affect EFL learners' foreign language speaking, anxiety is the factor that teachers should prioritize because it could lead to stress and depression which can erode students' English-speaking skills in the long term. In English class, students who have a low level of English might be more anxious when they have to speak English, as they may think of themselves as incompetent language learners; therefore, this study focuses on this factor in particular to heighten awareness of its significance among teachers.

Anxiety often comes with negative feelings of fear, nervousness, and stress, all of which affect the nervous system (Spielberger, 1983 as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986). It is one of the factors that demotivates students to produce the language they are learning, and it can occur in every student no matter how proficient they are. It could diminish their confidence in learning as well, because when they are anxious, they are not likely to perform well, and receive low scores in the subject they are studying. Among types of English classes, the speaking class is where teachers are most likely to notice students' anxiety. It can be noticed through the students' expressions and gestures as they attempt to speak. So, it is also important to study this factor in order to raise awareness and create solutions to help students overcome this obstacle in the future. Nevertheless, it cannot be generalized that students' level of anxiety always remains the same while they are speaking English in both online and onsite classrooms. Although they tend to be more anxious while speaking English in an onsite classroom, it cannot be assumed that they feel no anxiety while speaking English in an online classroom. For instance, some students' anxiety level is only moderate when they must give a presentation in an onsite classroom (Kurakan, 2021), yet their anxiety level might become lower or higher, or remain the same, if they must give a presentation in an online classroom. Normally, when students are learning English in an onsite classroom, most of them become afraid when it comes to speaking English, especially when they have to perform in public or they are being called to give an answer. There are various factors that some

researchers have mentioned such as fear of losing face (Pruksaseat, 2022), fear of negative evaluation from classmates and teachers (Ansari, 2015; Faqihi, 2023; Horwitz et al., 1986; Nugroho et al., 2021; Pruksaseat, 2022; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021), lack of self-confidence (Kalra & Siribud, 2020; Suryani et al., 2020), or no motivation to learn so they cannot remember vocabulary (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017) which could lead students to be unable to perform well.

On the other hand, when it comes to an online class, although it seems that students' anxiety level should be less than learning onsite since students may be allowed to turn off the camera, and they may be able to prepare their answers beforehand, it cannot be assumed that students' anxiety in speaking will be either heightened or diminished, and it cannot be assumed that every student prefers speaking online. The factors that could cause anxiety in an online learning environment could be the same as the factors in an onsite class, yet the anxiety levels could be different. Regarding online classrooms, it became the primary platform for learning when the COVID-19 outbreak started in 2020. Most students and teachers were forced to change the teaching and learning environment from the traditional onsite classroom to a fully online or hybrid learning environment which increased students' anxiety in different forms. Students may have been anxious since they were afraid that learning English in an online classroom might not be as effective as learning English in an onsite classroom (Kaisar & Chowdhury, 2020). During learning English in online classes, students, especially those with a low level of English, may feel anxious since they might not be able to understand the lesson together with their peers because they may not understand what the teacher has said or may be unable to hear clearly (Nugroho et al., 2021). Moreover, when they have an opportunity to speak, they might feel unsure of whether the audience has understood their message, since their speaking may not be as smooth as when speaking in an onsite classroom due to technical issues (Mhuentoei, 2023; Nugroho et al., 2021; Valizadeh, 2021).

However, as the situation improved in 2023, many schools and universities allowed students to learn onsite once more, which implies that the students have experienced learning in both online and onsite classrooms concurrently. Therefore, this is the most suitable period for collecting related data from students since the duration of changing the learning environment from the online to the onsite classroom is not long, so it is believed that they still remember their experiences, and they may be able to describe the differences between learning English in onsite and online classrooms as well. The impact of knowing the differences in speaking anxiety is that teachers will understand EFL learners' problems in different learning situations so that they will be able to find solutions to help guide them in the right direction. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate undergraduate students' speaking anxiety, specifically whether or not they have experienced different levels of anxiety in speaking English in online and onsite classrooms and to explore what factors can cause the differences and how each factor differently affects anxiety levels, through the following two research questions:

1. Is learners' level of anxiety in speaking English in an online classroom different from that experienced when speaking English in an onsite classroom?

2. What are the factors that create the differences, if any, of anxiety between speaking English in online and onsite classrooms?

In this study, speaking English in onsite and online classrooms mainly regards answering questions in English since students must provide answers by themselves, which could trigger anxiety. Lastly, it is hoped that this study will be useful for teachers and future researchers alike to recognize the different obstacles facing EFL learners during speaking English in online and onsite classrooms then to adapt or create lessons that could help students alleviate their speaking anxiety in both online and onsite settings.

Literature Review

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three factors related to foreign language anxiety which were communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension relates to learners' shyness, difficulties of listening and receiving information from listeners, and fear of public speaking. The next factor of test anxiety is influenced by a fear of making mistakes during their performance, especially in tests or quizzes. For some EFL learners, if they realize that they have to take the tests, they will begin to feel nervous and anxious as they are afraid of making mistakes during their tests even though they might be well-prepared. Researchers also defined the fear of negative evaluation as being fear of others' judgments, avoiding circumstances where judgments are made, and anticipating negative judgments from others. These three factors have also been used by other researchers (Nugroho et al., 2021; Pruksaseat, 2022; Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021) to investigate students' anxiety.

In addition, previous researchers applied the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) to assess learners' anxiety in various speaking situations. The scale is often used by researchers; for instance, Huang and Hwang (2013) created a survey using all 33 statements from Horwitz et al. (1986)'s FLCAS along with the researcher's own 20 statements about students' perceptions of learning English in a multimedia environment to find the relationship between students' language anxiety and the use of multimedia technology in the English classroom. Yaniafari and Rihardini (2021) also included the 33 statements from Horwitz et al. (1986)'s FLCAS in two sets of surveys to investigate and compare students' anxiety levels between the face-to-face and online classrooms. This study also applied a scale to help discover the differences between students' speaking anxiety in online and onsite classrooms.

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

There are common factors in learners' speaking anxiety that are almost always mentioned in research on the subject: learning environment (Huang & Hwang, 2013; Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021), forgetting appropriate words (Hidayati et al., 2023; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014), lack of self-confidence

(Kalra & Siribud, 2020; Suryani et al., 2020), nervousness (Daud et al., 2019; Suryani et al., 2020), limited vocabulary (Ansari, 2015; Nugroho et al., 2021; Pruksaseat, 2022; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2021), fear of mispronunciation (Pruksaseat, 2022; Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2021), and fear of miscommunication (Pruksaseat, 2022). These factors have been proven to increase students' anxiety and cause them to perform poorly. All of these factors can influence EFL learners in both online and onsite classrooms; however, some researchers (Kalra & Siribud, 2020; Pruksaseat, 2022) investigated one or more of these factors in specific contexts. Kalra and Siribud (2020) conducted research regarding anxiety in a public speaking class and revealed that the majority of participants lacked the self-confidence to speak in public. Pruksaseat (2022) conducted research regarding speaking anxiety in an online classroom and found some of the relevant factors, namely limited vocabulary, fear of mispronunciation and fear of miscommunication.

Aside from these factors, cultural obstacles that can cause speaking anxiety in EFL learners should be considered. Common cultural obstacles that occur to Thai EFL learners are shyness and feeling afraid of losing face. Sha'ar and Boonsuk (2021) revealed that Thai students were shy and likely to remain silent in discussions or speaking activities; similarly, Pruksaseat (2022) indicated that Thai learners were afraid to speak English in public because they were afraid to lose face if they made mistakes.

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in Online Classrooms

Although speaking foreign language in online classrooms seems to create less anxiety in EFL learners (Resnik et al., 2023; Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021), there are some factors that make EFL learners anxious during speaking foreign language in online classroom.

The research of Nugroho et al. (2021) explored speaking anxiety factors in online classrooms through five 11th grade students at an Indonesian school. The researcher measured the anxiety level of 30 students by using Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS, then selected five students from different anxiety levels to have an in-depth interview. The findings revealed that the majority of participants were anxious due to communication apprehension. They mentioned both intra-lingual and inter-lingual factors that provoked this anxiety category in online classrooms. The intra-lingual factors or factors that related to learners' characteristics were lack of vocabulary, lack of proper grammar, lack of proper pronunciation, lack of IT knowledge, misrepresenting thoughts, and inappropriate use of vocabulary. Meanwhile, the inter-lingual factors or factors that related to situation or environment that hindered them from speaking a foreign language were bad internet connection, teachers' teaching habits, being monitored online, limited internet balance, and device problems.

Another research by Pruksaseat (2022) utilized open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews to find the factors that led 50 Thai undergraduate engineering students from a Thai college to encounter speaking anxiety in online classrooms. The 50 participants mentioned the following six factors: a limited vocabulary, fear of wrong pronunciation, inability to process thoughts into words,

unpleasant psycho-physiological symptoms, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of miscommunication. The data from interviewing nine students revealed that more than half of the students interviewed did not feel embarrassed or suffer a loss of face when speaking English incorrectly, as they agreed that it was part of the learning process and it was natural to make mistakes. To some extent, it can be affirmed that speaking foreign language in online classroom can cause anxiety in EFL learners due to these above-mentioned factors.

Speaking Anxiety Differences Between Online and Onsite Classrooms

Some researchers have previously compared students' speaking anxiety level between online and onsite classrooms, with similar findings.

The research of Yaniafari and Rihardini (2021) included a survey to investigate 120 Indonesian university students from the English department and compare their anxiety level between online class and face-to-face class. The researchers found that overall learners' anxiety in online classes was lower than in face-to-face classes since they did not have to face an audience directly.

Another research by Resnik et al. (2023) who used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 437 EFL university students in Austria to explore the difference of EFL learners' foreign language classroom anxiety level between in-person before the COVID-19 outbreak and remotely during the pandemic. The results revealed that overall anxiety in the emergency remote teaching environment was slightly lower than in-person classes, yet most learners felt more overwhelmed due to the use of technology and workload in online EFL classes.

Another research work that also compared anxiety between online and onsite classrooms was from Mhuentoei (2023) who conducted questionnaires, in-depth interviews and classroom observations with 57 Thai undergraduate students who enrolled in a public speaking course to explore potential differences in learners' attitudes between online and onsite presentation, and investigate the causes of public speaking anxiety, its related difficulties and solutions. The results were that the students were anxious about presenting in both online and onsite classes due to different causes. In onsite classrooms, they were afraid of being evaluated negatively, felt unsure without a script, and lacked confidence due to language deficiencies; in online classrooms, learners were anxious because they were unable to receive reactions from the audience due to their cameras being turned off. They were also concerned about technology and believed that they could not use body language or gestures naturally.

These reviewed studies compared students' anxiety levels in online and onsite classrooms and revealed multiple significant factors that cause anxiety in speaking a foreign language in both onsite and online classrooms. To corroborate these studies, the present study utilized a mixed-method design to investigate students' speaking anxiety levels in onsite and online classrooms. The study sought to understand which context causes more anxiety in students and to discover whether any other factors can cause differences in anxiety levels along with the effect of each factor on anxiety levels.

Methodology

Participants

All the participants were studying in a Thai public university. The course they were studying focused on developing students' English communication skills in academic and technological contexts in particular, and this course was mainly taught in English, so all the students had opportunities to speak English through discussions and presentations. Thirty-six first-year undergraduate students from this class were chosen to collect data using the convenience sampling technique. All of them were asked to answer the questionnaire at the end of lesson in Week 14. They had to answer the first two questions which asked their nationality to ensure that the participants were native Thais since the research required only native Thai students, and asked them if they had studied English for at least five years. The reason for choosing this class is that the students had already experienced online learning, in the first semester of the 2022 academic year, in a course on basic English skills. Then, in the second semester, they had to study this particular course in an onsite classroom. Consequently, it was believed that these students had sufficient experience to provide useful information. Their experiences from learning English in both online and onsite classrooms could help them to compare their anxiety in different contexts.

However, only 26 students from this class completed the questionnaire, and seven of those were willing to participate in the interview stage. All of them were native Thai speakers and had been learning English for more than five years. Nineteen students (73.1%) were male, and seven students (26.9%) were female. Most of them were 19 years old; meanwhile, there were two students who were 18 years old and one student who was 20 years old. All of them studied in an engineering faculty, and their speaking ability varied from beginner (73.1%) to intermediate (26.9%). With these demographics, it could not be assumed that their thoughts and attitudes towards English speaking might be similar even though they were all in the same age group. In addition, since their major was not English, it is possible that they might not use English as often as students who are English majors, so they might feel more anxious in speaking English.

Research Instrument

The data was collected by using questionnaires and structured interviews, both in the Thai language. We decided to apply a mixed-method design in this study in order to measure the anxiety levels in online and onsite classrooms through a questionnaire, and through interviews we explored the various perspectives or attitudes of the participants regarding their English-speaking anxiety. The questionnaire, created via Google Forms, was used to find the potential differences of students' anxiety levels in speaking English between online and onsite classrooms. The first section of the questionnaire included two questions for selecting participants (nationality and total number of years studying English) and the questions for eliciting student's demographic (gender, age, first language, academic major, and English-speaking ability) through multiple choice and short answers since the students who registered

for this course could be from different faculties or majors. If there were students from the English major, their anxiety levels might be differently affected since their attitudes towards speaking English might be different from those of non-English major students. However, all participants in this class happened to study in the Engineering major. The second section provided seven statements which were selected from Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale because the questions from this scale are clear, well-considered, and relevant to the topic of speaking anxiety. However, the words *onsite* and *online* were added to make the statement more suitable for online and onsite classrooms. Therefore, there were 14 statements in total to elicit students' level of speaking English anxiety, as can be seen in the Appendix. The five-point Likert scale ranged from 5 (Strongly agree), to 4 (Agree), 3 (Neutral), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly disagree); then at the end of the questionnaire was information regarding the participant's consent for an interview.

The structured interview was subsequently conducted to elicit students' thoughts about speaking English in onsite and online classrooms and to help answer the second research question through six questions, which can also be seen in the Appendix. Structured interviews were used in this study in the hope that this method could elicit clear responses from the participants. The interview results were intended to enhance the findings from the questionnaire on whether any factors made students feel anxious in different ways or to different degrees between speaking English in online and onsite classrooms.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The questionnaire was given to participants in the 14th week of the course as they would at that point be familiar with the course and the teachers, and they might by then be able to perceive some differences between learning in an online and onsite classroom. Before collecting the data, information sheets and consent forms were given to the participants to inform them of the details and so that they would provide the data in an informed and voluntary way. After that, the students who were willing to provide the data were asked to complete the questionnaires at the end of class in order to not interrupt their class and to allow them to consider each question carefully. Then, seven students were willing to participate in the interview; two students responded in the questionnaire that they were willing to be interviewed, while the other five students were asked to participate in the interview. Each interview session was recorded and lasted in approximately five to ten minutes, and the participants were allowed to turn off their camera during the interview if they so preferred to prevent any discomfort.

After the information was obtained, Microsoft Excel was used to organize and analyze the data from both instruments. The results from the questionnaires were calculated into mean scores by calculating the total number of responses of each question then dividing by the total number of participants, which was 26. Next, standard deviation (SD) was calculated by using the formula (=STDEV). After that, the interpretation of mean scores was calculated by subtracting the maximum score (5) with the minimum score (1) then dividing the difference by the total number of scales which

derived 0.8. Then, 0.8 was added to the minimum score for the limit of the range. Students' anxiety level would be interpreted according to the mean range as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Interpretation of Mean Scores

Mean range	Descriptive rating
4.3–5.0	Very high
3.5–4.2	High
2.7–3.4	Moderate
1.9–2.6	Low
1.0–1.8	Very low

The description from Table 1 is used to represent students' perception of anxiety in this study. Students' anxiety could be interpreted as follows: *very high* means that the students are extremely anxious; *high* means that they are anxious; *moderate* means that they are anxious at a moderate level; *low* means that they are anxious at a low level; and *very low* means that they are anxious at a very low level.

Subsequently, after gathering all of the data from the participants in the interviews, the responses were translated into English and transcribed to find keywords from each response. This method was derived from Pruksaseat (2022), who used grounded theory to analyze qualitative data, and the present study adapted the method to find the most frequent words from each response due to the small number of participants. Microsoft Excel was also used to organize the data by creating tables and inserting the keywords. After that, the keywords would be marked based on frequency; then, all of the keywords were arranged from the most frequently mentioned to the least frequently mentioned to derive possible factors.

Results

To respond to both research questions, the findings are separated into two categories. The findings from the questionnaire show the comparison of students' anxiety level in each aspect between online and onsite classrooms through the table; meanwhile, the findings from the interview provide three potential factors that created differences in the learners' anxiety.

RQ1: Anxiety Level in Both Types of Classroom

To answer the first research question, the data from the questionnaire was analyzed to find the different levels of students' anxiety between onsite and online classrooms. After the analysis, the results found that learners' English-speaking anxiety level in online classrooms is clearly different from their

English-speaking anxiety level in onsite classrooms; the data in Table 2 shows the comparison of students' anxiety level in each aspect between onsite and online classrooms.

Table 2

The Comparison of Students' Anxiety Level in Each Aspect

Aspects	Onsite $\overline{x}$ (SD)	Online $\overline{x}$ (SD)
Even if I am well prepared for 'xxx' language class, I feel anxious about it.	3.5 (1.3)	3.0 (1.4)
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in 'xxx' language class.	3.5 (1.3)	3.0 (1.2)
I get nervous in 'xxx' class when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared for in advance.	3.4 (1.4)	3.2 (1.4)
I feel confident when I speak in 'xxx' foreign language class	3.0 (1.2)	3.0 (1.1)
I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students in 'xxx' class	3.0 (1.4)	2.8 (1.3)
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my 'xxx' foreign language class.	3.0 (1.3)	2.6 (1.3)
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my 'xxx' language class.	2.6 (1.1)	2.4 (1.1)

The data from Table 2 shows that the majority of students are likely to feel more anxious to speak English in onsite classes than in online classes in every aspect, except for their confidence which provides the same mean score ($\overline{x}$ = 3). According to the findings, students' anxiety level in onsite classrooms varies from low ($\overline{x}$ = 2.6) to high ($\overline{x}$ = 3.5), while students' anxiety level in online classrooms varies from low ($\overline{x}$ = 2.4) to moderate ($\overline{x}$ = 3.2).

The data shows that there are two aspects that cause students to have a high level of anxiety in onsite language classrooms. The first aspect is that even if they are well-prepared, they still feel anxious in onsite classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3.5), which is understandable since they are aware of being watched by their classmates while they are trying to speak the target language, which provokes their anxiety. On the other hand, although they still feel anxious in online classes even if they are well-prepared, their anxiety level is lower than in onsite classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3), as they do not feel that they are being watched since they are allowed to turn off the camera and thus avoid making eye contact with anyone.

The first circumstance could perhaps trigger the second aspect, in which students mention the feeling of their heart pounding when they are called on in language class. The findings show that they tend to feel their heart pounding when they are called on in onsite language classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3.5). Meanwhile, they also feel their heart pounding when they are called on in online classes, though not as anxious as

in onsite classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3). Subsequently, when the language teacher asks questions which students have not prepared for in advance, they tend to feel more nervous and anxious in onsite classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3.4) while they are still nervous in online class, yet their anxiety is slightly lower ($\overline{x}$ = 3.2). Surprisingly, the findings show that students feel equally confident when they speak in onsite classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3) and in online classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3). Although the previous data reveals they are likely to be more anxious in onsite classes, their confidence remains the same as in online classes, which implies that, in this regard, they feel equally confident about speaking in either onsite or online classrooms.

Nevertheless, their self-consciousness in online and onsite classrooms is not equal, though it is at a moderate level in both circumstances. Students tend to feel moderately self-conscious when speaking in front of other students in onsite classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3), as they might be nervous when they have to speak in front of their classmates and teacher; meanwhile, in online classes, they tend to feel less self-conscious ($\overline{x}$ = 2.8), yet still feel moderately anxious. Consequently, their self-consciousness in onsite classes could be the reason that they feel moderately unsure of themselves when they are speaking in onsite classes ($\overline{x}$ = 3), while there are some students who never feel quite sure of themselves when they are speaking in online classes ($\overline{x}$ = 2.6), yet their anxiety is at a low level.

Finally, their embarrassment to volunteer answers in their foreign language classes is the last aspect of the table as the aspect has lowest mean scores, which could imply that their embarrassment affects their anxiety only at a low level when they have to speak English in onsite and online classes. According to the table, since the previous aspects show that students' anxiety level in the onsite class is higher than their anxiety level in the online class, it is possible that those aspects may also affect their embarrassment about volunteering answers in the onsite class at a higher level than in the online class. The table shows that students feel more embarrassed about volunteering answers in onsite classes ($\overline{x}$ = 2.6), while they feel slightly less embarrassed to volunteer answers in online classes ($\overline{x}$ = 2.4).

The findings of the study suggest that the levels of anxiety among Thai students between online and onsite classrooms are not very different, yet students are likely to feel more anxious when they have to speak English in onsite classrooms. The reasons or factors that hinder their speaking could be diverse; yet in this study, the factors have been derived from students' perceptions by interviewing them, during which they mentioned some significant factors that cause them varied levels of anxiety. The factors are revealed in the second research question.

RQ2: Factors for Anxiety Differences in Both Types of Classroom

To answer the second research question, seven students were interviewed to investigate the factors that create the differences of anxiety between speaking English in online and onsite classrooms. Those seven students who participated in the interview had different English proficiency. Six of them spoke English at the beginner level while only one was able to speak English at the intermediate level.

Despite the small variation, their thoughts and perspectives regarding their speaking English in an onsite versus an online classrooms were different.

According to the data from interviewing seven students, six of them agreed that speaking English in onsite classrooms is more challenging and causes more anxiety, whereas only one student agreed that speaking English in the online classrooms was more challenging.

After that, all of them were asked whether they encountered any problems that made them anxious in onsite classes, and if they had also encountered the same factors in online classes. According to the data from the interviews, here are some factors that could potentially create the different levels of anxiety.

Nervousness.

Nervousness was the most frequently mentioned factor, cited by four of the seven participants. They explained that they became nervous when they had to speak English in onsite classrooms, especially when they were in front of other students and the teacher. They also said that nervousness made them unable to think of the words they needed or made them forget the words that they had prepared, and thus affected their speaking performances.

Here are some excerpts of responses from participants who mentioned how this factor makes them anxious during speaking in onsite classrooms:

I'm afraid of mispronouncing the words and also nervous, which makes me stutter. (Participant 1)

I'm too nervous to think of any words. (Participant 4)

When I'm nervous, the words or the script that I've prepared will be forgotten immediately. (Participant 5)

I feel nervous since there are many people watching, so I might not speak properly. (Participant 7)

However, when they were asked whether they encountered this factor during speaking English in online classes, only Participant 5 reported that they still had nervousness, yet they could reduce their anxiety by preparing information beforehand. So, it shows that the students tend to encounter this factor in onsite classes more often than in online classes.

This implies that nervousness could create the differences in students' English-speaking anxiety levels in online and onsite classes. In onsite classrooms, students are being directly watched by their peers and their teacher while speaking English; therefore, nervousness could heighten their anxiety because they are afraid to make mistakes when speaking in front of people, as reflected in their facial expressions, body language, or even their speaking ability, which makes them feel more pressured and stressed. Meanwhile, in online classrooms, this factor might cause no or little impact on students'

anxiety level since they are studying in their own space while probably leaving the camera turned off, which would likely make them feel more comfortable in speaking, so anxiety might not affect their speaking ability as much as when speaking English in onsite classrooms. Thus, the result could support the findings of the first research question, that students are likely to be more nervous in onsite classes when they are asked questions that they are not prepared for, and even if they are well-prepared, nervousness still triggers their anxiety when they have to speak in front of many people in onsite classrooms.

Limited vocabulary.

Secondly, three participants mentioned limited vocabulary as the factor that made them anxious in speaking English. Participant 3 said that they did not know how to say some words in English while they were speaking. Participant 5 said that they were unable to think of words or sentences by themselves due to this factor. Meanwhile, Participant 6 added that apart from this factor, they were not confident in speaking since they did not have a chance to practice speaking English with other people.

> *Sometimes I don't know how to say some words in English. (Participant 3)*
> *I cannot think of sentences or words by myself. (Participant 5)*
> *I cannot think of words due to lacking vocabulary, and because I don't have a chance to speak English with other people so I'm not confident to speak. (Participant 6)*

When it comes to online classes, Participants 3 and 6 did not encounter this factor as often as in onsite classes, while Participant 5 still found this issue occasionally, yet they could still handle it by searching for the needed vocabulary in advance.

According to the results, a limited vocabulary could affect the anxiety levels differently in onsite and online classes because students have an awareness of the number of English words that they had already recognized during the course. Therefore, the students who encountered this factor were likely to avoid providing answers in English since they were unable to produce English words by themselves or explain their answers in complete sentences. This likely affected their confidence and subsequently their speaking ability. In onsite classrooms, it appears that they are likely to feel more stressed, pressured and embarrassed in front of their peers and their teacher when they are called on to answer questions that they have not prepared the responses to in advance, which then leads to anxiety. Therefore, this factor could lead them to feel more unsure about themselves and more embarrassed about volunteering answers in an onsite classroom. However, this factor might not exacerbate their anxiety in an online classroom as they are able to search for the required vocabulary on the internet in advance, even though their speaking ability may not be very well developed.

Unable to remember vocabulary.

The last factor, which was mentioned by two participants, was being unable to remember vocabulary. The students explained that they tended to forget English vocabulary they had already learned when they were speaking in onsite classrooms. Participant 3 said that aside from limited vocabulary, this factor also obstructed their flow of communication when they forgot some English words they had learned, while they were speaking.

I cannot remember English words. (Participant 1)
I tend to forget English words while speaking. (Participant 3)

When they were asked whether they faced this problem in online classes, Participant 1 said that they still met it occasionally, while Participant 3 did not encounter it at all. According to the interview, although this factor was the least-mentioned, it still created differences in students' speaking anxiety level between onsite and online classes.

In onsite classrooms, when students suddenly forget English words or cannot find appropriate words to continue their sentences while speaking in front of people or talking to foreigners, they may also feel frustrated with themselves and pressured as they struggle to deliver their message or communicate fluently, which automatically increases their anxiety. Meanwhile, in online classrooms, similar to the issue of limited vocabulary, they can easily search for vocabulary on the internet, so they are not anxious at all. Therefore, it is possible that even if they are well-prepared, this factor could lead them to anxiety, especially if they tend to forget words while they are speaking in front of people.

Solutions to Increase Comfort in Speaking English in Both Classes

In addition, when all of the students were asked whether there were any solutions that could help them feel more comfortable in speaking English in onsite classes, Participants 1, 3, 6 and 7 said that if they had more opportunities to practice speaking English with their peers or teacher in-person, they would gain more confidence and speak more naturally; meanwhile, Participants 4 and 5 said that they would feel more comfortable or less anxious if they had their friends speaking English in front of the classroom with them, and only Participant 2 said that they would be more comfortable if they were able to notice listeners' reactions.

When the students were asked about solutions to help them feel more comfortable in online classes, Participants 1 and 5 mentioned turning off the camera could help as they can feel that they are not being monitored by their peers and the teacher, Participants 3 and 6 suggested reading the script while looking at the screen could help them, and only participant 7 mentioned group work, as they felt that there was less communication during learning online. However, Participants 2 and 4 did not provide any solutions, since they did not feel anxious in online classrooms. In the final section of the interview, the students suggested that to reduce students' English-speaking anxiety in both online and onsite

classes, they have to practice speaking, reading, and listening skills to gain more English vocabulary, which could make them more comfortable in speaking English and thus feel less anxious while speaking.

Interestingly, although the majority of students agreed that speaking English in onsite classrooms makes them more anxious than speaking English in online classrooms, they still prefer learning in onsite classes since they are able to socialize with their friends, which creates interaction. Besides, they also have more opportunities to practice speaking with other people and are able to notice listeners' reactions, and they also think that the environment in onsite classrooms is more engaging and enjoyable than that of online classrooms. This suggests that online classes are not always preferred by every student.

Discussion

This study aimed to discover the differences of students' English-speaking anxiety levels in online and onsite classrooms and identify the significant factors that cause such differences with two research questions. The first research question aimed to investigate whether students' English-speaking anxiety levels are different between online and onsite classrooms by using a questionnaire. The findings revealed that the online and onsite classrooms had different English-speaking anxiety levels, which were higher in the onsite classroom than in the online classroom in every aspect examined except for student confidence, which was the same in both circumstances. The results of this study could support the findings of researchers like Yaniafari and Rihardini (2021) and Resnik et al. (2023) who found that students' overall anxiety level in onsite classes was higher than their anxiety level in online classrooms. Therefore, the similarity of these findings shows that it is not surprising to realize that students' overall anxiety in onsite classrooms is higher than in online classrooms. Students tend to be more anxious when they become the center of attention while speaking English in onsite classrooms. Meanwhile, in online classrooms, they are more likely to feel that no one is watching them speak.

To recap, in onsite classrooms students are likely to feel more anxious even if they are well-prepared, feel their heart pounding harder, get nervous when the teacher asks questions they have not prepared for in advance, feel self-conscious while speaking, never feel quite sure of themselves, and feel more embarrassed to volunteer answers. The results are not surprising because students are speaking in front of other people in the onsite classroom, which makes them feel more anxious. Meanwhile, confidence in speaking was the only aspect for which the students said there was no difference between onsite and online classrooms. These findings are similar to those of Resnik et al. (2023) because their findings also revealed that students' anxiety in onsite classrooms was not definitively higher than in online classrooms in any of their chosen aspects. The researchers adapted Horwitz et al. (1986)'s FLCAS to find the differences of anxiety level between online and onsite classrooms, and they observed that among the four aspects that they investigated, students felt more anxious in in-person class in three aspects, while there was only one aspect that they felt more anxious in online class. In an in-person class, they felt that other students spoke English better, felt their heart

pounding harder, and felt more anxious even if they were well-prepared. Yet, they felt more embarrassed to volunteer answers in online class, which was different from the present study's result. These findings are helpful since the questionnaire helped determine students' anxiety levels, and the data clearly demonstrates the differences in students' anxiety levels; these questionnaire results may therefore help provide clear answers to the first research question. However, although students feel more anxious when speaking in onsite classrooms, they still prefer learning in onsite classrooms because they feel that there is more interaction and socialization.

Subsequently, the second research question aimed to identify possible factors that could create differences of English-speaking anxiety level in online and onsite classes by interviewing seven students. According to the results, some possible factors that could create differences of English-speaking anxiety level in online and onsite classes are nervousness, limited vocabulary, and the inability to remember vocabulary.

Firstly, more than half of the students mentioned nervousness as one of the factors that makes them anxious. Students cannot think of any words and are unable to speak properly, especially when they have to speak in front of other people in onsite classes, due to this factor. Besides, nervousness negatively affects students' speaking ability in onsite classes, which implies that the anxiety level in onsite class becomes higher than in online class. This result could support and confirm several works of research due to the similarity of the impact of this factor. It could relate to communication apprehension (Horwitz et al., 1986) since nervousness could affect students to become anxious and have difficulties to speak or communicate. It could also align with Daud et al. (2019) who also found that participants felt pressured and could not think of any words when they had to give a speech in front of people, due to nervousness and anxiety, Suryani et al. (2020) who included nervousness as one of the factors that hindered students from speaking, and Pruksaseat (2022) who elaborated upon the negative effects of nervousness by revealing that nervousness triggered some unpleasant psycho-physiological symptoms such as heart pounding, shaking, cold hands, trembling and sweating, all of which was detrimental to students' speaking performance. Nervousness could be noticed through facial expression or body language as well, which supported Mhuentoei (2023), who mentioned that the audience could notice speakers' nervousness while they were speaking in onsite classrooms. All of these findings suggest that it is common for Thai EFL learners to encounter this factor, which could hinder them from speaking, especially those learners who are shy or self-conscious and who need encouragement and support from their teachers.

The second factor is limited vocabulary, which is found in onsite class more often than in online class. The students who encountered this problem explained that this factor makes them anxious, as they are unable to produce English words on their own, and some students have to remember every word in their script since they could not think of English words by themselves. As a result, although the impact is not severe, it still increases speaking anxiety which demotivates students in attempting to speak. In addition, this factor could cause a difference in anxiety level between the onsite and online

contexts, because if students are already aware of their knowledge gap, they might not able to avoid speaking English in onsite class, and when they have to speak, they could feel embarrassed and anxious. Meanwhile in online class, they might feel less anxious since they can search for the needed words on the internet. So, the results from this study could align with those of other researchers (Ansari, 2015; Nugroho et al., 2021; Pruksaseat, 2022; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2021) since they also noted that this issue could increase students' anxiety as they did not have enough English words to express themselves properly, which made them afraid and not confident enough to speak English. According to the data, it seems that Thai EFL learners need more opportunities to encounter new vocabulary. As such, teachers should create activities to motivate students to find interesting core vocabulary and share it with their peers so that they can have the simultaneous experience of learning and using the words.

Finally, being unable to remember vocabulary was also mentioned in this study. The students who mentioned this factor feel anxious as it obstructs the flow of conversation, and they have difficulty remembering English vocabulary. Therefore, when they forget words or cannot find the correct words while they are speaking in onsite classroom, it automatically makes them anxious. The impact of this factor is similar to that observed in some previous research, because this study shows that being unable to remember vocabulary genuinely provokes students' anxiety. The results of this study could support those of Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014), who found that one of the causes of EFL learners' speaking anxiety was when they forgot the words they had learned or when they were unable to find the appropriate words. The results could also align with those of Hidayati et al. (2023), who found some students were anxious because they had difficulty remembering vocabulary. As a result, it is confirmed that these three possible factors, which were derived from interview contribute to answer the second research question according to the participants who confirmed that these factors triggered their anxiety in onsite classrooms more than in online classrooms. For some Thai EFL learners, some vocabulary might be difficult for them to remember, and they might not have the opportunity to use those words. Therefore, teachers should present vocabulary within a meaningful context so that students are able to memorize words more easily, and teachers should provide them with more opportunities to use the vocabulary they are learning. Nevertheless, although the results of this study could be used to moderate anxiety levels to some extent, there may be other factors that cause differences in speaking anxiety levels, such as the difficulty level of the content, the teacher's behavior, or the learning environment. Therefore, these factors should also be considered.

After realizing the differences of students' anxiety level in onsite and online classrooms, this study provides some suggestions for teachers. To help reduce students' English-speaking anxiety in both online and onsite classes, teachers should create a less stressful, more friendly and relaxed atmosphere to motivate students to practice speaking with ease and confidence. This method is also suggested by Mulyani (2018), whose study participants said that the language classroom should be a safe place to practice speaking. Teachers should also encourage students by noting that errors are a

natural part of language learning and encouraging them to be unafraid to ask for help from teachers (Faqihi, 2023; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). Plus, teachers should note their students' English knowledge level to adjust the lessons to suit that level. Besides, teachers should add activities that provide more opportunities and motivate students to use the vocabulary they have learned.

Even though the results of this study show that students' speaking anxiety in onsite classrooms is higher than in online classrooms, speaking anxiety in online classrooms should not be neglected, because as long as students feel anxious during speaking, it still affects their speaking performance. Therefore, to increase engagement in online classrooms, although it may be difficult for teachers to create an attractive online environment due to some limitations that they may encounter such as internet connection, a lack of integration of technological applications in teaching, or even a lack of teaching ability in online mode (Boonmoh & Kamsa-ard, 2023), the teachers have to involve students in talking as much as possible to increase interaction. Plus, pair work or group work is another method to activate students to communicate and collaborate with peers. Apart from teaching, teachers should also be advisors for students. They should recognize and understand students' problems and the causes of their anxiety in speaking English, then offer them some advice or solutions. If at all possible, teachers can allow students to share their opinions and feedback about lessons so that teachers can improve the lessons and help mitigate students' anxiety appropriately.

Conclusion

This study aimed to discover and identify the differences of Thai students' English-speaking anxiety in online and onsite classrooms through a questionnaire and interviews. The results showed that students' English-speaking anxiety level in onsite classrooms is greater than that experienced in online classrooms in almost every aspect, and the possible factors that could create differences in English-speaking anxiety level in online and onsite classrooms are nervousness, limited vocabulary and the inability to remember vocabulary.

This study hopes to raise awareness of the differences of anxiety in speaking English in online and onsite classrooms, because teachers must be aware that different contexts and factors have varied impacts on students' feelings to develop appropriate teaching strategies to help students cope with anxiety, especially when the teachers cannot observe students' expressions during online lessons. It is also hoped that this small-scale research could help in noticing the different level of EFL students' English-speaking anxiety between onsite and online classrooms, and help teachers raise awareness of the matter to find solutions to help reduce students' speaking anxiety and encourage them to improve their English-speaking skills as well. After teachers understood the reasons behind their learners' speaking anxiety in onsite and online foreign language classes, they can apply some of the suggestions from this study in their language classrooms to help alleviate their learners' anxiety. Teachers can motivate learners to practice speaking in onsite language class by creating more friendly and relaxed learning environments, encouraging them by pointing out that errors are natural, and creating some

activities that allow them to review the vocabulary that they have learned. In addition, interactions in online language class should be investigated and taken into consideration to prevent learners from feeling neglected. However, this study has limitations due to its limited number of subjects and data that is still inadequate to identify the exact differences in Thai students' English-speaking anxiety between online and onsite classes, though the above-mentioned factors could create differences to some extent. Therefore, this research topic could be further developed in the future.

Ethics declaration: This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (Approval code: KMUTT-IRB-COE-2023-078)

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Appendix

Anxiety while speaking English questionnaire

This questionnaire was created to investigate Thai university students' anxiety while speaking English in both an on-site and online classroom to understand whether it is different, as well as to discover factors that could cause differences in anxiety.

Part 1.1 Questions for selecting participants

Are you Thai?	Yes / No
Have you studied English for at least 5 years?	Yes / No

Part 1.2 Participant's demographics

What is your gender?	Male / Female / Other
What is your age?	_____
What is your first language?	_____
What academic major are you studying?	_____
What is your English-speaking ability?	Unable to speak English
	Able to speak English at a beginner level
	Able to speak English at an intermediate level
	Able to speak English like a native speaker

Part 2 The questions in the questionnaire and the participant's consent for an interview

Please choose the answer with your true feelings.

(1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my online foreign language class.
   1 2 3 4 5
2. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my on-site foreign language class.
   1 2 3 4 5
3. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my online language class.
   1 2 3 4 5
4. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my on-site language class.
   1 2 3 4 5
5. Even if I am well prepared for my online language class, I feel anxious about it.
   1 2 3 4 5
6. Even if I am well prepared for my on-site language class, I feel anxious about it.
   1 2 3 4 5
7. I feel confident when I speak in my online foreign language class.
   1 2 3 4 5
8. I feel confident when I speak in my on-site foreign language class.

1 2 3 4 5

9. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my online language class.

1 2 3 4 5

10. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my on-site language class.

1 2 3 4 5

11. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students in my online class.

1 2 3 4 5

12. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students in my on-site class.

1 2 3 4 5

13. I get nervous in my online class when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared for in advance.

1 2 3 4 5

14. I get nervous in my on-site class when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared for in advance.

1 2 3 4 5

Participant's consent for an interview after doing the questionnaire

Please read the information for an interview

1. The interview will be conducted via Zoom. The participant has to answer 6 questions regarding anxiety in English-speaking, problems that are found while speaking English in both the on-site classroom and online classroom, and solutions for handling anxiety. The interview will take approximately 10–15 minutes.
2. The interview will be recorded, but the participant is allowed to turn off the camera for comfort.
3. Not being willing to be interviewed does not affect any grades.
4. If none of participants are willing to be interviewed, the researcher needs to select 10 participants from the questionnaire for an interview.

Are you willing to be interviewed regarding anxiety while speaking English after doing this questionnaire?

Yes, I am.

No, I am not.

Questions for the interview

1. In your opinion, is speaking English in an online class cause you as much anxiety as speaking English in an on-site class? Why?
2. In which learning environment do you think it is more challenging to speak English? And, which one do you prefer? Why?

3. What problems do you encounter while speaking English in an on-site class? Are they the same problems that you encounter while speaking English in an online class?
4. What makes you feel more comfortable about speaking English in an on-site class?
5. What makes you feel more comfortable about speaking English in an online class?
6. Do you think there are any solutions for reducing anxiety while speaking English in both online and on-site classrooms? If yes, what are they?

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