Exploring the Relationship between Learners' Public English-Speaking Anxiety and their Speaking Performance in Class with Chinese ESL Students

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British Council ELT Master's Dissertation Awards 2018: Commendation

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Y3845527

MATESOL
University of York,
Department of Education
August 2017

Abstract

Public speaking performance, such as answering questions from teachers or peers and giving a public presentation, is a cause of foreign language anxiety (Woodrow, 2006). The present study's purpose was to identify Chinese advanced ESL learners' public speaking class anxiety in the context of Chinese MA TESOL (Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages) students in University of York, and then to explore the relationship between their public English-speaking anxiety in the classroom and their oral performance. For achieving the study purpose, 30 Chinese postgraduates studying in TESOL from University of York were asked to respond to a closed-question questionnaire, named Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS), which was used to evaluate students' public speaking anxiety levels in the classroom. Furthermore, 16 students out of the total were randomly chosen to give a public presentation in CELT classes (the classes from the Centre of English Language Teaching) and a private presentation to the researcher (only presented to the researcher). Analysing the data, results showed that Chinese advanced ESL learners had an overall low public speaking anxiety in the classroom. As for the relationship between speaking anxiety and oral performance, the author did not found a strong relationship between them by way of comparing scores from PSCAS and 6 criteria. However, by comparing the differences of presentations in two conditions, the findings indicated that students with higher public speaking class anxiety appeared to deliver speech poorly, with more grammatical mistakes and other oral problems. Finally, the study presented some limitations and pedagogical implications for reducing students public speaking anxiety in the classroom context.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals who have helped me over an intensive period of five months. It has been a period of intense learning for me, not only in the English teaching arena, but also on a personal level. Writing this dissertation has had a big impact on me.

In particular, I would like to thank my supervisor for some excellent conversations, support and the perceptive comments on my early drafts. My appreciation also goes out to all my participants in supporting me and taking part in the whole experiment. I would also like to thank my classmates and friends. We were not only able to support each other by deliberating over our problems and findings, but also happily by talking about things other than just our papers. My further gratitude goes to my proof-reader, Mr. Jon McGovern for his extensive and helpful comments on my draft.

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List of Abbreviations

ESL   English as a Second Language

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

CELT   The Centre of English Language Teaching

CU   Communication Unit

FLCAS   Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

IELTS   The International English Language Testing System

PSCAS   Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale

Chapter 1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, speaking anxiety has been perceived to be an anxiety-inducing aspect of foreign and second language learning for learners across the globe. Numerous students express a nervous and anxious feeling when speaking in front of peers and teachers. Some of them even have a mental block when speaking English (as cited in Liu, 2006, p. 301). The effects of foreign language anxiety have been explored for several decades. Scholars and researchers found that anxiety has a debilitating effect on the process of learning a second language (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Mak, 2011; Scovel, 1978; Suleimenova, 2012; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Woodrow, 2006), which can affect language performance in the long term and even hinder the development of language proficiency (Peng, 2014). Foreign language speaking anxiety needs to be consistently focused on by second language acquisition researchers and teachers in order to assist foreign language learners to suffer less anxiety to achieve their language goals.

While many previous studies on foreign speaking anxiety showed that there was a negative association between anxiety and speaking achievement, evidence to the contrary was found in others (as cited in Horwitz, 2001, p. 113). Scovel (1977) explained the reasons why there were different perspectives towards the relationship between language anxiety and language performance, which were attributed to different anxiety measurement researchers apply in their study and different focus of foreign language anxiety. Although some reasons have been explained, the influences of language anxiety on oral performance are not definitely clear.

1.1 Aim of the study

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between public English-speaking anxiety and students' speaking performance. Additionally, the study also aims to identify English advanced learners' public speaking class anxiety among Chinese postgraduates in the University of York. The present study can give some practical suggestions and pedagogical implications to reduce learners' speaking anxiety in the classroom.

1.2 Rationale

Anxiety is an essential influencing factor in foreign and second language learning in the classrooms and can adversely affect learner's language achievement in the target language. In particular, speaking anxiety is perceived to be the most anxiety-provoking factor for learners. There are substantial studies suggesting that oral public performance is a major

source of language anxiety for learners (Woodrow, 2006; Bailey, 1983). Studies on this area have been done largely by English-speakers, the first of which were several decades ago and most of which focused on learners within the context of America or other western setting. Other Asian groups of learners need to be examined, since it has been shown that Japanese, Korean and Chinese foreign language learners more commonly suffer from language anxiety and become consciously nervous, causing a poorly performance and decreased confidence in speaking a foreign language (Woodrow, 2006). Public speaking anxiety in the classrooms needs more exploration and researchers' attention in different contexts.

In addition, over the past few decades, most studies tended to focus on foreign language learners at a preliminary stage and non-English major students since many researchers assumed that foreign language anxiety is closely related to learners with low language proficiency. Logically, it seems that language anxiety can be more commonly experienced by beginning learners or learners at a lower level of language competence, but empirical findings show that the relationship between language anxiety and language competence is not as precise and clear as it seems. Some researchers found that there was no significant difference in foreign language anxiety among different levels of learners (Cheng, 2002; Pichette, 2009). Fairly recently, Toth (2016) noted that advanced learners and English major students showed a greater anxiety than pre-intermediate non-English majors. More empirical investigations are need to be done to explore foreign language anxiety among advanced learners.

Furthermore, there is an increasing number of international students doing postgraduate study at universities in the UK. Students from China represent the largest group and show a growing trend in numbers. Some of these Chinese students are advanced ESL learners who have been learning English for more than 10 years with a score of 7 in the International English language testing system (IELTS). Some studies about foreign language anxiety have been done with Chinese English learners. However, not many studies have specifically focused on public speaking class anxiety, let along in the context of the advanced overseas Chinese ESL learners.

1.3 Methodology

In this study, a PSCAS (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012), will be carried out to assess learners' level of public English-speaking anxiety in the classroom. Participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire and to perform two presentations, with one in CELT classes and the other in a private non-anxiety context in front of the researcher. Their presentations were recorded and then transcribed, before being analysed in terms of 6 oral performance criteria variables

and 7 oral performance problems. The correlational analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between public speaking anxiety and oral performance.

1.4 Contributions to research and practice

In the previous studies, most of the researchers often explored the effects of speaking anxiety by comparing learners' scores in speaking exams and their anxiety level from self-evaluated questionnaires. However, the spoken exam score cannot be the only way to evaluate learner' real oral outcome as it can be very subject, and also the self-reported questionnaire may fail to examine students' real feelings. Moreover, participants' language proficiency differs from one to another. Thus, in the present study, except conducting correlational analysis between self-reported anxiety level and learners' oral performance, the tasks require the same participant to deliver two presentations under two different conditions: a public anxiety context and a private non-anxiety context. One presentation was conducted in a CELT classes, while another one was presented only to the researcher. The key variable was the public speaking anxiety caused by the public condition. A comparison of the two presentations in the different conditions was conducted to investigate the differences of oral problems between the two speeches so that the author could explore the influence of public speaking anxiety on language outcome.

1.5 Structure

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 gives a general introduction to the background of the study, the purpose and the rationale. In Chapter 2, the author discusses the definition of foreign language anxiety and reviews the previous studies about foreign language anxiety and speaking anxiety. Additionally, the author also reviews some empirical research about the association between speaking anxiety and learners' oral achievement. Chapter 3 is about methodology, where the researcher introduces the methods employed to evaluate learner' public speaking class anxiety level and to investigate the relationship between anxiety and performance. Chapter 4 offers in-depth analyses of speech and questionnaire data. In Chapter 5, the author presents the discussion based on the results. In Chapter 6, the author draws some general conclusions about the findings and the pedagogical implications and limitations of the study, ending with suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2 Literature review

Foreign language anxiety has long been treated as a variable influencing second or foreign language teaching and learning, which has been the main focus of research (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986; Phillips, 1992; Hewitt and Stephenson, 2012; Liu, 2006). Many researchers and scholars started trying to find a relationship between language anxiety and second language learning and performance around half a century ago. Through empirical studies and self-reports, researchers found that many learners have a distressing experience when learning and using a second language due to the anxiety (Horwitz, 2001), though the anxiety level differs from person to another. In the most cases, teachers and students agree that language anxiety impedes language speaking. Many researchers have suggested that language anxiety does interfere with language performance, but at the same time several scholars, such as Chastain and Kleinmann, have argued that there is no positive correlation between the foreign language anxiety and their language achievement (as cited in Horwitz, 2001, p. 113). That means that the causes of the foreign language anxiety, learners' anxiety level and the relationship between the language anxiety and language performance have not yet been definitively identified.

2.1 Theoretical background of foreign language anxiety

2.1.1 What is foreign language anxiety?

Although a lot of research on the subject of second language anxiety has been conducted, foreign language anxiety has not been defined adequately and clearly (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Moreover, the researchers have suggested that foreign language anxiety is a situation-specific anxiety, which means that language anxiety would be generated when students will be assessed in a certain target language context. Foreign language anxiety has been described as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 128).

Additionally, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) redefined foreign language anxiety, referring to it as the feeling of unease, tension, nervousness, apprehension and even dread experienced when learning or using a second or foreign language. These kinds of feelings are more closely associated with listening and especially speaking. Intuitively, learners may feel uncomfortable and unconfident to speak a foreign language. More recently, language anxiety has been described as an expression of "the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning and using a second language and is especially relevant in a classroom where self-

expression takes place" (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 3). As noted, language learning anxiety is a psychological variable, often experienced in the classroom. For foreign language learners or second language learners, it can include any negative feeling, physical or mental, such as unease, worry or tension, when learning a second language.

2.1.2 The effects of foreign language anxiety on language learning

The effects of language anxiety manifest themselves in two aspects: self-unwillingness to learn and worse learning achievement. As language anxiety can cause the feelings of unease, worry and even dread, it can lead to the lack of confidence to speak. Due to the fear of negative feedback, learners are less willing to express themselves and lose confidence in speaking a foreign language. Speakers who have high anxiety when talking may refer to themselves as "poor thing" or other derogatory phrases (Toth, 2017). The growing lack of self-confidence can affect learners' learning motivation. They may not want to study any more. They may not be willing to communicate in the target language and some of them even end up with abandoning their studies. This change in the attitude of learners can be a consequence of language anxiety (Phillips, 1992).

Foreign language anxiety has an adverse effect on language acquisition and is likely to hinder the learning process. Suleimenova's study (2012) has found that speaking anxiety exists among the Kazakh second-year university students and she revealed that students with higher anxiety regard anxiety as an obstacle hindering their better performance. The students with higher anxiety levels in speaking a foreign language perform worse than those with lower language anxiety. Similar results were found in numerous other studies (Liu and Jackson, 2008, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986; Phillips, 1992; Hewitt and Stephenson, 2012). It can be concluded that speaking anxiety would affect speakers' perspective on learning a foreign language and thus hinder the language learning process in the long term. However, different perspectives have appeared from some studies. Some scholars believe that the perceived anxiety, to some extent, can improve language performance, which is known as "facilitating anxiety" (Scovel, 1978). According to these results, if anxiety can be treated more properly with some intervention, it can be transferred from a hindering factor into a facilitating of the achievement of language learning goals. To put it simply, the effects of foreign language anxiety can be two-sided.

2.2 Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's progress on foreign language classroom anxiety

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope were three pioneers who made great contributions to the field of language anxiety. In their studies, they tried to identify foreign language anxiety as a

conceptually distinct variable and build a link between foreign language anxiety and performance anxiety, including "1) communication apprehension; 2) test anxiety; 3) fear of negative evaluation" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 127). These three types of language anxiety performances can be understood respectively as experiencing panic and anxiety when communicating with others in a foreign language or having language tests and receiving negative feedback from peers or teachers. Additionally, they gave a widely-accepted definition of foreign language anxiety and described the effects of language anxiety on learning, and designed a valuable measurement to evaluate anxiety level: the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS).

To find the common characters that language learners share, Horwitz and other researchers invited 225 students from the University of Texas to join a group named "Support Group for Foreign Language Learning" where learners would discuss their difficulties when grasping a foreign language. The experiences learners shared helped them to design the FLCAS, a five-point Likert scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each item represents a description of learning language reflected by learners, such as "*I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class*" and "*the more I study for a language test, the more confused I get*". To date, this questionnaire has proven to be internally reliable and has been administered by many scholars (Aida, 1994; Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012; Phillips, 1992). Subsequently, a Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) (see Appendix 2) based on FLCAS was developed by Yaikhong and Usaha in 2012, which specifically aimed to evaluate students' public speaking class anxiety levels. There were 17 measures of speech anxiety, communication apprehension, and anxiety adapted from FLCAS with a few changes. For example, there were items like "I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English" in PSCAS, while items like "It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language" were omitted as they were indicative of the anxiety related with the learning process and the teacher, instead of speaking anxiety (Yaikhong and Usaha, 2012).

The data they collected in their study showed that language learners experienced significant foreign language anxiety. Many students reported that they had severe reactions to foreign language learning. Some of them even postponed their language courses. The effects of anxiety might differ from one to another but, certainly, anxiety played an important role in every aspect of language achievement. The higher anxiety level students have, the worse their performance is.

2.3 Empirical research into English speaking-in-class anxiety

Speaking, out of the four skills areas, is closely related to language anxiety and cited as one of the activities which are more prone to generate foreign language anxiety (MacIntyre, & Gardner, 1994; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Liu & Jackson, 2008, Liu, 2006). Foreign language anxiety interferes with every part of language use, including the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing, but this feeling is more tightly associated with speaking, especially within the context of the classroom. Speaking has become a significant skill in the process of grasping a second language, but learners indicated that "they have more anxiety in speaking class than others and are easily to be anxious and panic when they are required to do oral communication or presentation" (as cited in Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012, p. 23). It indicates that speaking anxiety needs more focus and exploration.

2.3.1 The causes of English speaking-in-class anxiety

In terms of the factors contributing to English-speaking anxiety, researchers hold different views. Woodrow's study (2006) explored the major reported causes of second language anxiety. He invited forty-seven participants, who were advanced English learners for academic purposes, to take part in an interview regarding their previous experience of learning English. The results indicated that the major cause of distress was speaking to native speakers, which suggests that second language speaking anxiety is interfering with students' willingness to expose themselves to a foreign language environment. Further, according to the responses from participants, their anxiety was attributed to skills deficit or retrieval interference in general. Skills deficit is caused by lack of practice whereas retrieval anxiety is related to the recall of previous knowledge, or more specifically, that learners draw a blank and forget what they want to say.

Furthermore, Mak's research (2011) reported the five causes of English-speaking anxiety among 313 Chinese ESL learners at a university in Hong Kong, including "speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation; uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers; negative attitudes towards the English classroom; negative self-evaluation; and fear of failing the class/consequences of personal failure". These factors were identified by the data collected from FLCAS. Besides, speaking in front the class without preparation, being corrected when speaking, and not being allowed to use the first language in a second language class were also examined as anxiety-provoking variables. The most significant of these is the speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Similar results have been found in Woodrow's study (2006), as the qualitative data showed that giving speeches and other oral performance were the most stress-provoking factors in the in-class context. On top of that,

other possible causes may result in anxiety, such as personal previous experience of language learning, learners' self-esteem, classroom environment (Young, 1991, p. 434) and the students' relationship with teachers (as cited by Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012, p. 171).

2.3.2 Public English-speaking anxiety in the classroom

Public speaking anxiety is one type of social anxiety (Clevenger, 1984) and can be described as a feeling of fear and worry when speaking in front of group of people (MacIntyre & Thivierge, 1995). It also can be defined as a fear and tension when speaking in a social context. As discussed above, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) considered foreign language anxiety as a cluster of three categories: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Public speaking anxiety can be categorised within the type of communication apprehension, as speaking in group or in public ("stage fright") (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 127) is a typical feature of communication apprehension. Communication apprehension plays a key role in speaking anxiety. Commonly, if learners are afraid of speaking with others, they are more likely to have difficulty in speaking in front of a group or on the stage.

The effects of communication apprehension or public speaking anxiety have been discussed for the past few decades. Previous studies demonstrated there are many negative effects in communication apprehension, especially for the English as a second language (ESL) learner and the English as a foreign language (EFL) learner (Alemi, Daftarifard & Pashmforoosh 2011). Studies have argued that public speaking may be the main predictor of anxiety and consequently leads to poor academic performance. The learners with a higher level of public speaking anxiety can make poorer speech preparations which leads to a less successful performance (Menzel & Carrell, 1994). As noted in Woodrow's study (2006), students reported in interviews that when giving oral presentations and performances in front of an audience, they felt more anxious and nervous. Similar results have been found in Samimy and Tabuse' study (1992) where the authors cited that public class speaking anxiety was one of the most influencing factors in determining oral performance among Japanese students in American university.

For the past several decades, even though many researchers have focused on comprehensive speaking-in-class anxiety, from test anxiety and question answering anxiety to oral presentation anxiety, the author has not found much research which directly and emphatically examines public speaking anxiety by assessing oral presentation in the classroom rather than oral test assessment.

2.3.3 The relationship between English public speaking anxiety and speaking achievement

In foreign language class, speaking anxiety is commonly regarded as an unwelcome emotion. English-speaking anxiety can have a debilitating effect on leaners oral achievement and performance. A lot of research in this field has been done to show the influence of English-speaking anxiety on the learning process in a classroom context. In Woodrow's study (2006), he explored the relationship between second language speaking anxiety and oral performance by comparing the data from FLCAS and scores from and IELTS type oral assessment. 275 advanced English learners studying an intensive English for Academic Purpose Course in Australian university were invited to participate in this project. The correlational analysis in his study indicated that speaking anxiety adversely affects oral performance in class, although the correlation was not very significant.

On top of that study, empirical research by Phillips (1992) has also found a substantial impact on the relationship between English-speaking anxiety and oral achievement. The author recruited 44 students at intermediate level, who had been learning French for 3.2 years on average. The Pearson correlation analysis between the data from FLCAS and the data from oral tests discovered a link between anxiety and oral performance and showed a strongly significant and inverse correlation between foreign language anxiety and various criteria for students' oral accomplishment (r=-.40, p<.01). A replication of research (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012) has been done after twenty years in which the author confirmed the results of Philip's study (r=-.49, p<.001), which was conducted among 40 students at intermediate level who had 10.97 years of English study on average. All the participants in these studies are the students who have been learning English for a long time rather than beginners. However, other researchers hold a different perspective, as they believe that there is no relationship or no positive relationship between these two variables (as cited in Horwitz, 2001, p. 113). One similarity between these previous studies was that the measurements used were FLCAS and test scores, which means that researchers may not get the same results if different measurements were to be employed. Interestingly, although many researchers believe that speaking anxiety hinders language performance, others hold the view that poor language performance contributes to speaking anxiety in a vicious circle. They believe that poor language accomplishment is the cause instead of a consequence of anxiety (Sparks, Ganschow & Javorsky 2000).

2.4 English-speaking anxiety among Chinese ESL learners

China is a country where students are required to learn English as a foreign language from a very young age. English-speaking anxiety has been explored in plenty of studies in terms of

learners' attitudes, language proficiency and language achievement in an effort to help Chinese students achieve their academic goals in education. In Liu's study (2006), she explored English anxiety levels among 546 Chinese students at three different proficiency levels by a triangulation of methods, including FLCAS, observations, reflective journals and interviews. More than a third of participants agreed with 20 items described in FLCAS, which means many students had anxiety with English. As for the differences among the three groups, she suggested that more proficient students tended to be less anxious, although the differences were not significant. Furthermore, she found that many students would not actively speak in oral class and contributed less to the group discussion or peer discussion, let alone oral presentation. In sum, the results showed a significant number of Chinese English learners struggling with speaking anxiety. Indeed, anxiety has been suggested as an affective variable hindering learner L2 performance, which provides additional evidence to substantiate the previous related studies (Aida, 1994; Phillip, 1992; Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012).

Education in a Chinese setting is different from Western education. Chinese learners are educated in a system where Confucianism is highly valued, leading to a high pressure on students to succeed at school (Starr, 2012). Furthermore, research has shown that the unwillingness to speak in the classroom among Chinese EFL learners and their language anxiety have been closely tied up with Confucian values of "face" and its value on "silence", as Chinese people cherish dignity and believe that keeping silent in class is the way to show respect to teachers (Liu, 2002). Although there are some common results gained from many previous research into anxiety in the Western context, some differences appeared in studies in Chinese situations (Watkins & Biggs, 1996; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Besides, language proficiency ties up with language anxiety. In Chinese context, the more proficient students tend to have less anxiety (Liu, 2006). However, Jee's study (2016) illustrated that learners with high second language proficiency would have high levels of anxiety. The discrepancy in these two views, to some extent, means it is not clear whether advanced speakers will be more anxious in language learning or not. From the review studies, the author wants to investigate whether language anxiety experienced by the Chinese learners perceived may be different in varying degree from that of learners of other cultures in many different aspects.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research questions and hypotheses

Given the concerns and interests in English public speaking anxiety, the study described below attempts to discover the English-speaking anxiety which Chinese ESL learners experience. Next, the impact of speaking anxiety on learners' oral performance, specifically public oral presentation, will be explored. It investigates the differences between the public oral performance in the context of anxiety and oral performance in a non-anxiety, non-public context to see whether anxiety causes worse performance. In order to get more reliable and accurate results, both a qualitative method (via questionnaires) and quantitative method (via presentations) are employed. The effect of speaking anxiety on language achievement is explored from two different perspectives. Firstly, it is investigated by correlation analysis between PSCAS and 6 oral performance variables in public presentations, and secondly, it is investigated through the comparison of oral problems in an anxiety and public context and in a non-anxiety private context.   Three key research questions are the following:

1)   What is the level of public English-speaking class anxiety among Chinese advanced ESL learners?

It is hypothesised that Chinese advanced ESL learners may have a medium-anxiety or low-anxiety level, as in Liu's study (2006), the students in the proficient group reported a low anxiety level in English based on their scores of FLCAS.

2)   What is the relationship between the Chinese advanced ESL learners' perceived anxiety when speaking in class and their public speaking performance?

For the second research question, the prediction is that the more anxious higher learners would have poorer oral performance, which has been supported by Phillips' study (1992) and Hewitt and Stephenson's study (2012).

3)   How do oral performance problems compare in an anxiety and public context and a non-anxiety, non-public context?

My hypothesis for the last research questions was that participants would come across more oral problems in an anxiety and public context. If so, this would mean that participants would perform better in a non-anxiety, non-public context than when giving a presentation in a public and anxiety situation. This hypothesis was formulated by Woodrow's study (2006), where the author found when giving oral presentation and performances in front of an audience, students perceived more unease and apprehension.

3.2 Data collection methods

3.2.1 Research instruments

3.2.1.1 Presentation record and transcription

A verbal performance instrument, oral presentation (see Appendix 3 and 4), was used in this study. 16 participants performed a 10-minute public presentation about their own dissertation proposal in CELT class. These 16 participants were also required to present the same topic presentation in a non-anxiety non-public context. Two of their speeches were recorded and then transcribed. The presentations which participants give are the practice of their formal dissertation presentation, which is very important to them in terms of gaining credits and they would feel stressful and nervous when giving an oral public presentation in CELT class while they would feel less or no anxiety when giving a presentation in a non-public context.

3.2.1.2 Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS)

A Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012), comprising 17 items, was used as an anxiety measurement. The measurement FLCAS evaluating foreign language anxiety was not used in this context, as this scale measures every part of anxiety in the classroom rather than focusing on public speaking anxiety. The items of PSCAS are answered on a 5-point Likert scale, ranking from "strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1). The level of anxiety is revealed in participants' overall scores or mean scores. The total summed scores of PSCAS are 85. As mentioned in Yaikhong and Usaha's study, scores higher than 68 were viewed as high anxiety, between 68-51 as medium anxiety and lower than 51 as low anxiety. Importantly, some items, items 4, 8, 10 and 12, showing the positive attitude need to have the values reversed. This means that the option "strong disagree" represents a score of 5 rather than 1 and vice versa. This study calculates the summed scores rather than mean scores.

3.2.1.3 Six oral performance criteria

With regard to the criteria of evaluating participants' speaking performance, 6 oral performance criteria were adopted and revised based on Phillips' (1992) oral performance criteria, which can be used to assess participants' oral performance in presentation. There are originally 8 criteria evaluating oral performance, but the author discards two of them, since those two variables are more related to writing skill. The remaining six oral performance criteria variables are: 1) percentage of total words in communication units (CUs); 2) average length of CUs; 3) percentage of error-free CUs; 4) percentage of words in error-free CUs; 5)

percentage of total words in mazes; 6) average length of mazes. These six criteria can be divided into two categories: communication units and mazes. As for the definition of CUs and mazes, CUs is basically an independent clause with all its modifiers (Loban, 1976) and maze has been explained by as "a series of words (or initial parts of words), or unattached fragments which do not constitute a communication unit and are not necessary to the communication units" (p. 10). Every independent clause was treated as a CU. For example, "this talk will last around 10 minutes, and there will be 5 minutes for questions" was separated as two CUs, as "and" connected two independent clauses. Mazes consist of various forms, including stuttering and repetitions, hesitation with silence or with "ums" and "uhs", message abandonment, gobbledygook (nonsense language use). The author has double checked the content of presentations with participants after the presentation, so there was no unrecognisable speech when transcribing them.

3.2.2 Participants

The participants were 30 Chinese postgraduate students who were enrolled in MA (Master of Arts) TESOL (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages) in the University of York. All of them have almost finished their 1-year master's degree courses in English. They are regarded as advanced learners, as they were English major students when they studied their undergraduate degrees in China and got a score of 7 in IELTS, and also, these students have been learning English for more than 10 years. These 30 students were required to complete the PSCAS questionnaire, while 16 students were randomly chosen to be recorded their presentations. They would give two presentations about their research study, including an oral public presentation in CELT classes and a non-public presentation in front of the researcher. Two oral performances were compared and analysed.

3.2.3 Procedure

The study consists of two sources of data, including the data collected from the questionnaire and data from recorded presentations. Firstly, 8 participants' presentations were given in CELT class publicly, after which the 8 participants were required to present private presentation only in front of the researcher, while another 8 participants were asked to present their presentation in front of the researcher first before doing so in CELT class. The reason for this step was to control the possible effects of teachers' feedback, since those who present first in the classroom may be trained better and then give a better presentation in a private condition than those who presenting first in a private context. Both the presentations were

recorded, analysed and compared. After that, the students completed a self-evaluation about their feelings when speaking English in class by filling out the questionnaire.

3.3 Pilot

The questionnaire used in this study is called Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale (PSCAS), which was adopted and adapted by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012), based on the widely used Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986). This questionnaire is a one-dimensional measure of speaking components in public speaking class, as the anxiety level is self-evaluated by participants. In Yaikhong and Usaha's study (2012), all these items in PSCAS were validated by three English teachers with rich teaching experience, one assistant professor and two other assistant professors with PhD degree. The PSCAS was piloted with 76 participants before it was administered in Yaikhong and Usaha's study. In my research, I used this questionnaire to indicate Chinese ESL students' public speaking anxiety levels in ESL public speaking class. Two participants were asked to complete this questionnaire as the pilot.

In previous studies, a four-point Likert scale was adopted, since most responses from participants were at the midpoint if using a five-point Likert scale. However, from the data collected in the pilot phase, neither participant 1 nor participants 2 chose the mid option, which means the midpoint option would not influence the results. The four-point Likert scale was changed to a five-point scale and was conducted in administration phase. No participant indicated any problem with the understanding of each items, as all the items had been proofread by an English native speaker. Thus, there was no alteration in this questionnaire. The pilot dataset has been applied to the final experiment.

3.4 Data analysis

For the first research question, 30 participants were asked to complete the PSCAS questionnaire, attempting to find out the level of public English-speaking class anxiety among Chinese advanced ESL learners. The PSCAS, a five-point Likert scale, comprised 17 items. Each item was answered by a point, ranging from "5) Strongly Agree" to "1) Strongly Disagree". According to Yaikhong and Usaha (2012), participants' scores should be summed up totally. Scores higher than 68 were regarded as high anxiety, between 68 and 51 as medium anxiety and lower than 51 as low anxiety. Additionally, as four items in a PSCAS are expressing positive attitudes while the rest of them are expressing a negative opinion, the values should be adjusted to different options from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Thus, the items "4", "8", "10", "12" of a PSCAS have the values reversed.

For the second research question, Pearson correlations between six oral performance criteria variables and a PSCAS were performed. The presentation the participants conducted in public English-speaking class (CELT classes) was analysed in terms of these six oral variables, which can show how much better or worse their performances are. A PSCAS can identify participants level of public speaking class anxiety. By means of Pearson correlation, the author examined the strength of the relationship between oral performance and anxiety level. The author followed the procedures of Phillips (1992), and Hewitt and Stephenson (2012). If the participants can be divided into three groups, low anxiety group, medium anxiety group and high anxiety group (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012), based on their PSCSA scores, the author would conduct an ANOVA to examine whether there is a significant difference in these six oral performance criteria variables among these three groups. If the participants cluster in one group, such as low anxiety group, indicating that PSCAS does not prove to a sensitive enough measure, the author would rescale them into three subgroups to discover potential anxiety-related distinctions in oral performance.

For the third research question, a paired samples t-test will be conducted. The author will analyse each participants' two presentations in two different contexts in terms of six oral performance criteria variables and other oral problems. The independent variables were the two contexts, an anxiety and public context and a non-anxiety and private context, while the dependent variables were participants' language outcomes in terms of the oral performance criteria and oral problems. Some of these problems are subcategories of mazes, such as repetition, message abandonment, gobbledygook, self-correction, unfinished utterances and false starts. Pausing also was regarded as an oral problem which students may have when making presentation. As the participants are the same participants in each condition, the author used the paired samples t-test. By means of this test, the author attempted to find out the differences of oral performance in an anxiety and public context and a non-anxiety, non-public context. If participants have more oral problems in an anxiety context, this suggests a relationship between anxiety level and oral achievement. The oral problems of all presentations have been coded as following:

[P]	Pausing
[R]	Repetition and stuttering
[MA]	Message abandonment
[G]	Gobbledygook
[S]	Self-correction
[U]	Unfinished utterances
[FS]	False starts

3.5 Ethical issues

The ethical issues surrounding research should be considered. All the participants are over 16 years of age. As for the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix 1), participants will be asked to sign the form, where they will be informed in advance about what their involvement in the research study will entail, the purpose of study and other information about the study. The amount of time I asked participants to give is reasonable. No questions in my questionnaire would cause distress to participants or offend them. All the data collection methods are appropriate to the context and participants' anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed. Participants, in return, they will receive the results of the research.

Chapter 4 Results and analyses

For the first research question, the results indicated that these Chinese advanced ESL learners have low anxiety levels when speaking in public in English classrooms, which is in accord with the author's hypotheses. In terms of the second research question, a negative but not statistically significant relationship was found between public English-speaking class anxiety and oral performance, which means anxiety would not affect participants' oral performance significantly. As for the last research question, the author found that there were differences of oral performance problems in an anxiety and public context and non-anxiety, non-public context. That indicates that the anxiety and public context would cause more oral problems than the non-public context, and that public speaking class anxiety leads to worse language outcomes.

4.1 Chinese advanced ESL learners' level of public English-speaking class anxiety

RQ1: What is the level of public English-speaking class anxiety among Chinese advanced ESL learners?

Achieving a respectable preliminary internal consistency at 0.84 after being piloted by 76 participants (Yaikhong and Usaha, 2012), the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) has been conducted to measure the extent to which Chinese advanced ESL learners felt anxiety when giving oral public presentations in English classrooms. Table 1 summarises the participants' responses to the PSCAS, showing participants' real feelings towards doing public speaking in English classrooms. All the questions are in the left column refer to different feelings students may encounter regarding public English-speaking in the classroom. The percentages represent the number of students who chose each option from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The "Total" showed the number of participants. There were 30 participants in this study.

Table 1. PSCAS items with numbers and percentages of students selecting each alternative (*N=30*)

	Question	(5) Strongly Agree		(4) Agree		(3) Undecided		(2) Disagree		(1) Strongly Disagree		Total
1	1. I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English.	0.00%	0	16.67%	5	3.33%	1	**70.00%**	21	10.00%	3	30
2	2. I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance.	6.67%	2	26.67%	8	10.00%	3	**53.33%**	16	3.33%	1	30
3	3. In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	0.00%	0	16.67%	5	10.00%	3	**66.67%**	20	6.67%	2	30
4	4. I feel confident while I am speaking English.	6.67%	2	**60.00%**	18	30.00%	9	3.33%	1	0.00%	0	30
5	5. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.	0.00%	0	16.67%	5	13.33%	4	**60.00%**	18	10.00%	3	30
6	6. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.	0.00%	0	6.67%	2	10.00%	3	36.67%	11	46.67%	14	30
7	7. I get nervous when the English teachers asks me to speak English which I have prepared in advance.	3.33%	1	10.00%	3	3.33%	1	50.00%	15	33.33%	10	30
8	8. I have no fear of speaking English	13.33%	4	40.00%	12	23.33%	7	23.33%	7	0.00%	0	30
9	9. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on.	0.00%	0	33.33%	10	23.33%	7	36.67%	11	6.67%	2	30
10	10. I feel relaxed while I am speaking English.	0.00%	0	**53.33%**	16	33.33%	10	13.33%	4	0.00%	0	30
11	11. It embarrasses me to volunteer to go out first to speaking English.	0.00%	0	20.00%	6	6.67%	2	**56.67%**	17	16.67%	5	30
12	12. I face the prospect of speaking English with confidence.	10.00%	3	**53.33%**	16	30.00%	9	6.67%	2	0.00%	0	30
13	13. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English.	3.33%	1	20.00%	6	20.00%	6	43.33%	13	13.33%	4	30
14	14. I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English.	3.33%	1	23.33%	7	16.67%	5	**56.67%**	17	0.00%	0	30
15	15. I dislike using my voice and body expressively while I am speaking English.	0.00%	0	3.33%	1	10.00%	3	**53.33%**	16	33.33%	10	30
16	16. I have trouble to coordinate my movements while I am speaking English.	3.33%	1	6.67%	2	20.00%	6	**56.67%**	17	13.33%	4	30
17	17. Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.	0.00%	0	20.00%	6	3.33%	1	**60.00%**	18	16.67%	5	30

As shown in Table 1, the respondents did not agree with the items in PSCAS and showed a very positive and confident attitude towards speaking English in the classroom. For example, many students chose the following responses: "I feel confident while I am speaking English" (60%), "I feel relaxed while I am speaking English" (55.33%) and "I face the

prospect of speaking English with confidence" (53.33%). Besides, they rejected some of the items, such as "I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English" (70%), "In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know" (66.67%), "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English" (60%).

The general tendency of participants' public speaking anxiety in the English classroom is shown in Table 2, including mean, standard deviation, minimum, median, mode, maximum and range. The total score was computed in accordance with the principle that "strongly agree" refers to 5 while "strongly disagree" refers to 1. Items 4, 8, 10 and 12 expressed the feeling in a positive way, so the values assigned to "strongly agree" was 1 and "strongly disagree" was 5. The total value of PSCAS can indicate participants' anxiety level in public English-speaking in the classroom. The higher score students get, the higher anxiety they have. According to Yaikhong and Usaha's study (2012), scores greater than 68 were regarded as high anxiety, between 68-51 as medium anxiety and lower than 51 as low anxiety. In this study, the mean of PSCAS is 39.70, which is much lower than 51. It indicates that Chinese advanced ESL learners have low anxiety in public English-speaking class anxiety. However, there were still 4 participants (13.33%) categorised as medium anxiety, as shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Descriptive statistic of the PSCAS (N=30)

Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Median	Mode	Maximum	Range
39.70	9.29	23	38	38	66	40

Table 3. Participant division into three anxiety groups (N = 30)

Anxiety group	Low anxiety	Medium anxiety	High anxiety
Mean	<51	51 - 68	>68
Total	26	4	0
Percentage	86.67%	13.33%	0

4.2 The relationship between public English-speaking class anxiety and oral performance

RQ2: What is the relationship between the Chinese advanced ESL learners' perceived anxiety when speaking in class and their public speaking performance?

With respect to the second research question, Pearson correlations were conducted. In Pearson correlations between the six oral performance criteria variables and the PSCAS

scores of 16 Chinese ESL learners, randomly chosen from the 30 Chinese students, the results showed that the scores from PSCAS were not strongly correlated with any of these oral variables. Table 4 shows the results of correlation between students' anxiety levels and their scores on the six oral performance criteria variables. However, although the relationship was not very significant, the researcher noted that there was an inverse relationship between students' anxiety level and their oral performance. There were weak but negative correlations, with three variables of total words in CUs ($r = -0.152$, $p > 0.05$), average lengths of CUs ($r = -0.189$, $p > 0.05$), percentage of error-free CUs ($r = -0.021$, $p > 0.05$). There were weak but positive correlations, with the variable of percentage of total words in error-free CUs ($r = 0.052$, $p > 0.05$), the variable of average length of maze ($r = 0.075$, $p > 0.05$) and the variable of percentage of total words in mazes ($r = 0.255$, $p > 0.05$). Overall, the findings revealed that these correlations were very weak, so we cannot conclude that students with higher anxiety are more likely to delivery short CUs or to make more mistakes in CUs.

Table 4. Pearson correlations between the six oral criteria variables and the PSCAS scores

	r	*p*
Total words in CUs	-0.152	0.573
Average lengths of CUs	-0.189	0.484
Percentage of error-free CUs	-0.021	0.939
Percentage of total words in error-free CUs	0.052	0.849
Average length of maze	0.075	0.782
Percentage of total words in mazes	0.255	0.341

Note: CU = Communication unit

In studies by Phillips (1992) and Hewitt and Stephenson (2012), who also conducted the correlation between students' anxiety levels and oral performance, the researchers categorised their participants into three groups: low anxiety, medium anxiety and high anxiety, according to their scores in FSCAS (scores greater than 68 were regarded as high anxiety, between 68-51 as medium anxiety and lower than 51 as low anxiety). However, in the present study, 93.75% of students were in the low anxiety group, as shown in Table 5. Thus, the author separated all the participants into three subgroups, subgroup A, subgroup B and subgroup C (scores greater than 49 were regarded as subgroup A, between 30-49 as subgroup B and lower than 30 as subgroup C), as shown in Table 6.

Table 5. Categories of anxiety group (N = 16)

Anxiety group	Low anxiety	Medium anxiety	High anxiety
Mean	<51	51 - 68	>68
Total	15	1	0
Percentage	93.75%	6.25%	0

Table 6. New categories of anxiety group (N = 16)

Anxiety group	Subgroup A (higher anxiety)	Subgroup B (medium anxiety)	Subgroup C (lower anxiety)
Mean	>48	30-48	<31
Total	1	11	4
Percentage	6.25%	68.75%	25%

When the author carried out ANOVAs on the means scores of each of the six oral performance criteria for the three subgroups (A, B and C), the author did not find statistically significant results for any of the variables ($p > 0.8$), which means there was no strong link in these six oral performance criteria variables among the three subgroups. However, as noted in the descriptive statistics, our lower anxiety subgroup C produced longer CUs in their oral presentation than our subgroup B, moderate anxiety subgroup (14.17 words vs. 13.52 words, on average). The participants in the moderate anxiety subgroup B were more likely to make mistakes when delivering their presentations than those in the lower anxiety subgroup (78% error-free CUs vs. 84% error-free CUs, on average). Moreover, our lower anxiety subgroup C uttered shorter mazes in presentation than our moderate anxiety subgroup B and higher anxiety subgroup A (1.04 words vs. 1.56 words, 1.04 words vs. 1.38 words, on average), which was also indicated by the percentage of total words in mazes (5% in subgroup C vs. 8% in subgroup B; 5% in subgroup C vs. 6% in subgroup A).

As mentioned in the Methodology section, mazes include any stuttering, repetitions, pausing, message abandonment, unfinished utterances and gobbledygook, or nonsense. For example, "I am going to recruit 50 participants of I…" in one participants' presentation was treated as message abandonment. An example of repetition was "I will, I will research this two questions", where "I will" was tallied as one maze. Any pause more than two seconds

was regarded as a single pause. As for unfinished utterances, "eth…" in the phrase "it is not eth…ethical for teachers to provide everything" was coded as one unfinished utterance.

In sum, although participants who were more anxious when giving public presentations encountered slightly more oral problems, the author did not find a statistically significant relationship between public English-speaking anxiety and students' oral performance.

4.3 The comparison of oral problems in an anxiety and public context and in a non-anxiety private context

RQ3: How do oral performance problems compare in an anxiety and public context and a non-anxiety, non-public context?

As for the third research question, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the oral performance problems of presentations in a public anxiety context and in a private non-anxiety context. The results showed four statistically significant differences among the 6 oral variables and 7 oral problems. There were significant differences in: the second variable, average length of CUs for public anxiety (M=13.72, SD=1.87) and private non-anxiety (M=14.56, SD=1.89) conditions; t(15)=-2.31, p = 0.035; the fifth variable, percentage of total words in mazes for public anxiety (M=6.75%, SD=3.94%) and private non-anxiety (M=5.19%, SD=3.60%) conditions; t(15)=2.398, p = 0.03; oral problem message abandonment for public anxiety (M=0.44, SD=0.63) and private non-anxiety (M=0.06, SD=0.25) conditions; t(15)=3, p = 0.009; oral problem gobbledygook for public anxiety (M=0.53, SD=0.64) and private non-anxiety (M=0.20, SD=0.41) conditions; t(14)=2.65, p = 0.019. The results mean that public speaking anxiety really does have an effect on students' oral performance in some respects. Specifically, our results suggest that public English-speaking anxiety can lead to more oral performance problems so that students are more likely to delivery presentations poorly.

To acquire more details about the differences between presentations under the public anxiety condition and the private non-anxiety condition, the within-participants comparisons were also conducted. The author compared the mean scores differences for the 6 oral variables and 7 oral problems to illustrate the effect of public English-speaking anxiety on students' performance. It revealed that there was a strong difference in the two presentations in terms of 6 oral performance criteria variables and 7 oral problems in the two contexts, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. However, the author found the results showing that students in a public speaking context are more likely to make oral mistakes and perform worse than when giving a presentation privately in a non-anxiety context.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of means scores differences of 4 variables in public context with anxiety and private context conditions. Based on our results, the author can find that there were indeed some differences in all the variables in the two contexts. According to Figure 1, it revealed that participants in a private non-anxiety context are more likely to produce longer sentences than in a public anxiety context, as the mean of percentage of total words in CUs in a public context and private context were 94% and 95% respectively. On top of that, participants made more oral mistakes when delivering presentations in public condition, as the mean of percentage of error-free CUs in public context is lower than that in private condition (80 vs. 84). In a public anxiety environment in the classroom, students created more mazes, which did not contribute to a successful presentation (7 vs. 5).

Figure 1. Percentage of Means scores differences of 4 oral performance criteria variables in the anxiety and public context and private context conditions
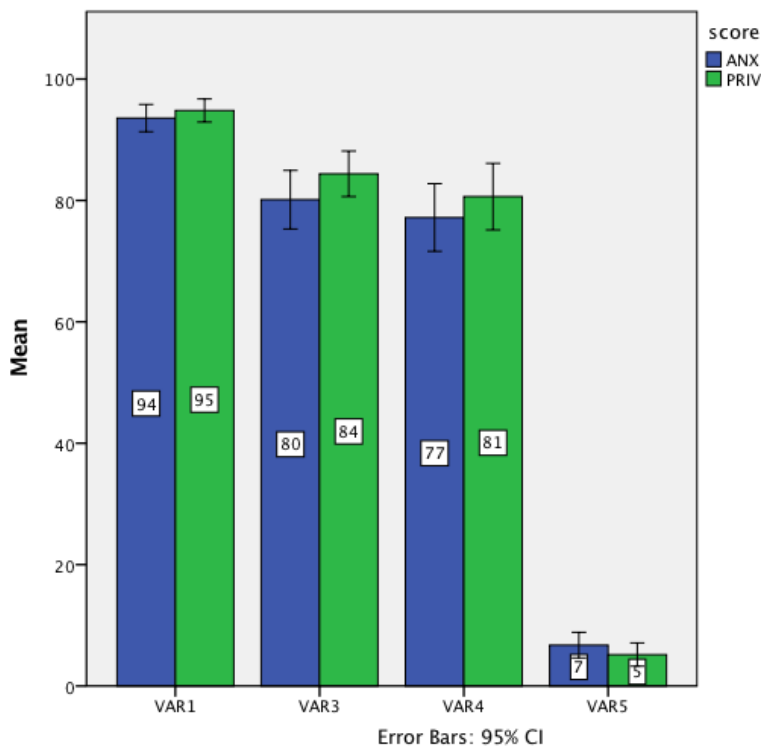
Notes: "VAR1" refers to the first variable "percentage of total words in communication units", "VAR3" refers to "percentage of error-free CUs", "VAR4" refers to "percentage of words in error-free CUs" and "VAR5" refers to "percentage of total words in mazes".

With respect to the other variables, as noted in Figure 2, there were more differences between the two oral performances. The two variables "VAR2" and "VAR6" are related to "VAR1" and "VAR5", which indicated, as illustrated in Figure 2, that participants in a private

non-anxiety context could create longer and more complete CUs and were less likely to make grammatical mistakes than under the public anxiety condition.

As for the 7 oral performance problems, it is significant that students faced more oral performance problems under an anxiety and public condition while performing better in a private non-anxiety context, since all the figures pertaining to the public context are greater than those in a private context. Notably, the scores for "P" referred to the number of times students paused for more than 2 seconds and the numbers for the other 6 oral problems represented the number of words in each problem.

Students frequently used repetitions and self-correction in both contexts, which may reflect the most common speaking problems learners have. Message abandonment and gobbledygook were not the main problems for learners as the mean values of these two problems were lower than 1. On average, students repeated 11.5 words in giving a ten-minute public speech while stuttering when pronouncing 8.9 words when delivering a presentation in a private environment. For example, in one presentation, the speaker said: "I I I elaborated it on this more." "I I" was tallied as two words for words repetition. Besides, learners corrected their mistakes themselves very often in both contexts (8.44 vs. 8.19). The self-correction can be illustrated by the italicized words in this sentence: "…the students who has the better note-taking strategies use will get more *will get higher* score in listening tests". As for the variable of pausing, participants more frequently paused or hesitated to produce words when presenting speech in an anxiety context (note: the pause due to the shifts between slides cannot be regarded as an oral performance problem).

The mean values for unfinished utterances and false starts in a public condition and in a private condition are as follows: 2.69 vs. 1.94 and 2.19 vs. 1.94 respectively. When giving public presentations, students faced more problems with unfinished utterance and started falsely more frequently. For example, in the phrase "in the more compli…complicated task, the participants need to tell the story based on same six pictures", "compli" was regarded as an unfinished utterance and was marked as one unfinished utterance, as there was only word in this utterance. In "You do not… that seems take too much logical thinking", "You do not…" was treated as a false start with 3 words, because "you do not" was not the information that the presenter wanted to deliver in this sentence.

To conclude, through paired samples t-test and mean scores comparison for all oral performance variables, the author found that there were four strong differences between the two conditions: the average length of CUs, the percentage of total words in mazes, oral problem message abandonment and gobbledygook, although the differences between the remaining variables and oral performance problems were not very strong. This means that

there is a clear-cut relationship between public speaking anxiety and oral performance. Therefore, the author concludes that public speaking anxiety does affect learners' oral performance in some respects.

Figure 2. Mean scores differences of 2 oral performance criteria variables and 7 oral problems in the anxiety and public context and the private context
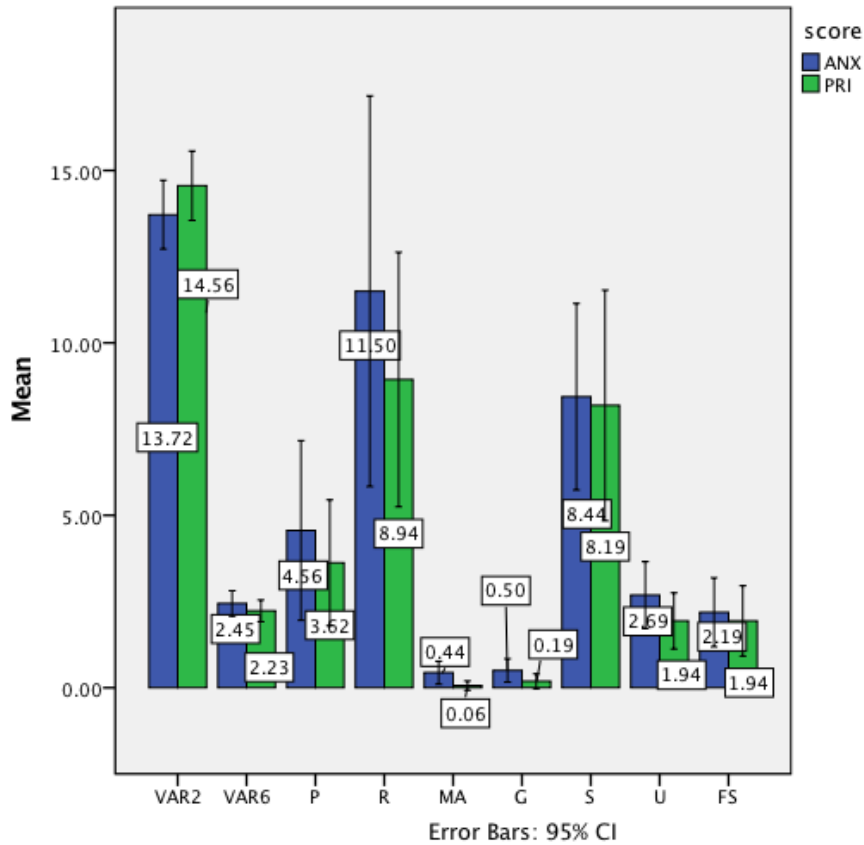
Notes: "VAR2" refers to the average length of CUs, "VAR6" refers to the average length of mazes. "P" represents "pause", "R" for "repetition", "MA" for message abandonment, "G" for "gobbledygook", "S" for "self-correction", "U" for "unfinished utterance" and "FS" for false start.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 The reasons for Chinese advanced ESL learners' level of public English-speaking class anxiety

The first research question was about a PSCAS questionnaire, discovering participants public speaking class anxiety levels carried out among 30 Chinese ESL learners in University of York, U.K. The scores participants got from the PSCAS have been tallied. The results of these scores and statistical analysis of PSCAS indicated that these Chinese ESL learners exhibit a low level of public speaking anxiety in English classrooms.

Although some students were not very confident in doing public speaking in the English classroom and showed a comparably higher anxiety score in PSCAS (with scores between 51 and 68), a mean score of 39.7 indicated that more than 80% of participants experienced little or even no anxiety in presenting public speech in English class. This means that these Chinese students were very confident and relaxed in speaking English in the classroom. The findings were not consistent with those in Liu' study (2006) and Liu and Jackson's research (2008), which also explored the anxiety level of Chinese EFL students by conducting FLCAS. In their study, at least one-third of the students experienced moderate to high anxiety in the oral English classroom and were apprehensive about public speaking.

The author may speculate that these differences can be explained by the difference in participants and in the self-evaluation scale of anxiety employed. The participants in Liu's study (2006) and Liu and Jackson's study (2008) were undergraduate non-English majors while the participants in the present study were postgraduate English majors who got a score of at least 7 in IELTS, which means the English proficiency of the participants in this study, on average, was higher than that of those students in Liu's study and Liu and Jackson' s study. Additionally, the participants in our study were studying in the UK and this learning background may have influenced their English-speaking anxiety, as in Matsuda and Gobel's study (2014), there was a significant connection between overseas experience and lower anxiety in speaking English. On top of that, the evaluation scales were different in this study and the previous studies. A foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) was conducted in previous studies while the PSCAS applied in this study was revised and based on FLCAS. Although the different results of the study showed that proficient students tended to be slightly less anxious, the correlation was very weak.

According to the data from those who had a moderate anxiety level, 75% of moderately anxious students noted that they can get nervous when they forget the information they know. It can always happen when they deliver an oral presentation in front of peers and teachers in

the classroom. Many students reported: "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English (item 5)" (75%) and "I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on (item 9)" (75%). Except the mental feeling caused by anxiety, students also had physical discomfort, as 75% of them reported: "certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English" (item 13). Anxious students reported feeling panic when they have to speak in English without advance notice, as they noted: "I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance" (item 2). However, interestingly, they still felt very anxious even with good preparation, since they reported: "even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English" (item 17). It reflected that a good preparation would not be a key way of minimizing, which is not consistent with Mak's (2011) suggestion that speaking in front of the class without preparation was an anxiety-provoking factor.

5.2 The comparisons between this study and previous studies and the reasons for non-significant results

With regard to the second research question, a Pearson correlation and ANOVAs have been carried out to explore the relationship between students' public speaking anxiety level measured by PSCAS and students' oral performance in terms of six oral performance criteria variables. The results show that there was no statistically significant correlation between PSCAS and oral performance. That means we cannot confirm that the students with higher public speaking anxiety were more likely to give presentation poorly.

Our findings were not in line with Phillips's study (1992) and Hewitt and Stephenson's replication study (2012). In Hewitt and Stephenson (2012), a statistically significant and positive correlation has been found for the variable of total words in CUs and a statistically significant and negative correlation for the percentage of total words in mazes. In Phillis (1992), he found negative relationships for average length of CUs and percentage of total words in CUs. Three negative weak correlations have been found for the first variable percentage of total words in CUs, for the second variable average length of CUs and for the third variable percent of error-free CUs. The other three variables were positively and weakly correlated with anxiety levels. In both the previous studies and the present study, oral performance was associated with anxiety, featured by higher anxiety and resulting in poor performance. The worse performance was shown in "quantity and correctness" (Hewitt and Stephenson, p. 181, 2012). For example, students with higher anxiety would produce fewer words and fewer error-free phrases and sentences. Simply put, these students did not give presentations as successfully as those who exhibited with lower anxiety.

The statistically non-significant correlations may be attributed to the following factors: the number of participants, the nationality of the participants, language proficiency, the different anxiety scales employed and importantly, the CELT context. The public context set in this research was the CELT classes, where the participants were asked to deliver a presentation, but this presentation was a practice one instead of an assessed task. Thus, students may not have put lots of efforts into preparing this presentation. Furthermore, the participants in previous studies were not Chinese student and therefore had different learning backgrounds from Chinese students. Although all of these participants received an overall score of 7 in IELTS, their speaking skills may have varied, as shown in Hewitt and Stephenson (2012), who demonstrated that language ability played a modest role in the negative correlations between anxiety level and oral performance.

With regard to the ANOVAs conducted in this study, the author found the results that there was no strong relationship in these six oral performance criteria variables among the three subgroups: subgroup A (higher anxiety), subgroup B (moderate anxiety) and subgroup C (lower anxiety). These results were not consistent with those from Hewitt and Stephenson's study, in which the authors reported 2 statistically significant ANOVAs for the sixth variable, average length of mazes, and the fifth variable, percentage of total word in mazes, among the three subgroups. Accordingly, as shown in the results of the present study, the participants in subgroup C were more likely to produce longer CUs and fewer mazes when delivering presentations than those in subgroup B. An interesting result was that the difference shown between subgroup C and subgroup B was not found between subgroup B and subgroup A. This may be explained by the small number of participants in subgroup A.

In sum, the outcomes explained above indicated that higher public speaking anxiety in the public context tended to have more problems with quantity and correctness in oral speaking, which led to worse oral performance.

5.3 The differences in oral problems under the two contexts and implications

To examine the relationship between speaking anxiety and oral performance, simply comparing the scores from PSCAS and the six oral performance criteria is insufficient and unreliable. There may be some deviations in the PSCAS, since participants are equipped with different levels of sensitivity. Thus, in order to explore the relationship between them, the author compared the differences of oral performance problems in an anxiety and public context and a non-anxiety, non-public context by carrying out paired samples t-tests. The author compared two presentations in terms of 6 oral performance criteria variables and 7 oral problems. 4 statistically significant differences were observed in the paired samples t-

test for the second variable average length of CUs, the fifth variable percentage of total words in mazes, oral problem message abandonment and gobbledygook, while the other correlations were not very strong. Since the results revealed that the mean number of average length of CUs for private non-anxiety condition was greater than the mean for the public anxiety condition, the author can conclude that participants were able to utter significantly longer sentences in a relaxed private and non-anxiety condition than in the public anxiety condition. Furthermore, the mean number of percentage of total words in mazes for the public anxiety condition was greater than the mean for the private and non-anxiety condition, indicating that participants created more words or unattached fragments which resulted in incoherence of oral performance. Furthermore, the mean scores for both oral problems, message abandonment and gobbledygook, in the public anxiety context were higher than those in the private context, which suggests that participants were more likely to make mistakes under the condition of public speaking anxiety. Thus, the author can conclude that public speaking anxiety is associated with poorer oral performance, as measured by the quantity and correctness of output.

These outcomes reflect other findings in the literature, for example, Suleimenova's finding that students' speaking anxiety hindered their oral performance and Phillips (1992) and Hewitt and Stephenson (2012), who found statistically significant and negative correlations between anxiety scale and oral interview score (grade).

Mean scores comparisons for the 6 oral performance criteria variables and 7 oral problem between the two conditions have been conducted to illustrate the effect of public speaking anxiety on students' performance. The author observed that while only 4 variables showed statistically significant differences, the differences in the other variables may be seen in the results table. Since all the mean values of the 7 oral problems in the public anxiety condition were greater than those in the non-public condition, the outcome showed that the participants encountered more oral problems in an anxious public environment. For example, students were easier to pause, to repeat, to correct, or to delivery an utterance something which was nonsensical and incoherent. Public speaking class anxiety might be the potential cause of these differences, however, other factors, such as personality and first language, might also have an influence on oral performance. Participants may feel panic even when giving public speech in their native language. Thus, how much does first language contribute to the results has not yet been clear.

Some interesting and new phenomena were observed in this study by comparing transcriptions of presentations in the two conditions. There were more oral problems observed in the presentation in the public anxiety context. First of all, some participants

forgot the message they had prepared to deliver and repeated the same phrases again. For example, one participant said: "I will be happy if you ask me questions at the end *if you have any questions*". The italiclized phrase indicates the part repeated. This oral performance problem is different from the other variables above, as it is not about stuttering or just repeating words but needless duplication. In addition, some grammatical problems, such as rules of countable and uncountable nouns, only occurred in the public speaking context. For example, one student presented "researches", in her public presentation while she used the word "research" correctly in her private one. Another participant used the words "terminologies" and "methodologies", although these are uncountable while expressing them correctly in a non-public context. This could have indicated a problem with language proficiency if students had made this mistake under both conditions. However, this problem only appeared in the condition of public anxiety, so the author may speculate that this may have resulted from the public speaking anxiety students experienced under a public condition. Besides, when presenting presentations in class, some participants even directly stated that they were panicking and nervous. For example, a participant said "sorry, I am so nervous" to peers and teacher in their public speaking. These unexpected findings were very useful in supporting and illuminating our findings from the paired samples t-test to enhance our understanding of the ways in which public speaking anxiety can have a negative influence on students' oral performance. Further to that, it also confirmed some previous research findings (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986; Phillips, 1992; Hewitt and Stephenson, 2012; Liu, 2006).

However, the oral problems observed above were not found in every individual student. According to the results of PSCAS, many students reported that they did not feel panic and anxiety in speaking English and were very confident when speaking English in front of peers and teachers. If participants do not have any public English speaking anxiety, the differences between the public presentation and private presentation may not be attributed to anxiety but other factors, such as the lack of preparation and attitude and personality. Alternatively, some participants did have anxiety when speaking English in class, but they did not have a clear understanding of their public speaking anxiety and made a wrong self-evaluation. This also indicates that using the measure of PSCAS, students' levels of public speaking class anxiety may not be identified precisely. In other words, only employing an anxiety scale to evaluate anxiety level is insufficient. The low scores which the participants got from PSCAS did not mean they did not have any public English speaking anxiety. This is the reason why the author conducted the third research question to discover the effect of anxiety on language performance by comparing two presentations in different context.

Overall, this study found that the Chinese advanced ESL learners experience low anxiety levels in public English speaking in the classroom. Furthermore, our study obtained quantitative evidence that there was no statistically significant but negative correlation between public English-speaking anxiety and speaking performance in terms of the 6 oral performance criteria variables, which cannot support Phillips' study (1992) and Hewitt and Stephenson's duplicated study (2012). However, by comparing participants' two presentations in a public anxiety context and in a private non-anxiety context measured by the 6 speaking performance criteria and 7 oral performance problems, the author observed that students encountered more difficulties in speaking when doing so in an English classroom and giving a presentation. On the basis of quantity and correctness of verbal outcomes, participants perform better without public speaking anxiety in a private and relaxing environment than in a public context.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Several conclusions about the Chinese EFL learners' public speaking anxiety level in the classroom and the relationship between speaking anxiety and oral performance are warranted from the results of the study. The author explored the public speaking class anxiety among Chinese advanced ESL learners. No significant correlation between their scores in PSCAS and 6 oral performance criteria has been discovered in this study but the author found that there were differences between some oral performance variables in a public context with anxiety and a non-anxiety private context. It would seem that students with higher public speaking anxiety perceived more oral performance problems.

6.1 Aim and methodology of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between public speaking anxiety and oral performance and to discover whether students have fears in doing public speaking in front of classmates and teachers. Additionally, the author wanted to have a clear understanding of what the level of the Chinese advanced ESL learners' public English-speaking anxiety in the classroom. Since many previous studies found that there was a negative correlation between these two factors, the author would like to see if this negative relationship also appears in the context of Chinese advanced ESL learners. If public speaking class anxiety has an adverse effect on students' oral achievement and affect their quality of performance, then, there are some pedagogical implications for teachers to create a more relaxed classroom atmosphere.

In order to answer three research questions, the author recruited 30 Chinese postgraduates in MA TESOL to complete a PSCAS questionnaire, which was used to evaluate participants level of public speaking class anxiety. Then, 16 participants of those were randomly chosen to give two presentations. The first presentation was performed in a CELT English class, regarded as a public anxiety context and the second presentation was performed in front of the researcher only, set as a private and no or less anxiety context. Pearson correlations have been conducted between the scores from PSCAS and the public presentation in terms of 6 oral performance criteria variables to explore the link between these two factors. Moreover, ANOVAs were carried out to see the differences in these oral criteria among three anxiety subgroups. These methods were reduplicated from Phillips' study (1992). Since participants' English proficiency, learning background and personality are different from one to another, the researcher then compared and analysed two presentations of the same participant based on 6 oral criteria variables and 7 oral performance

problems to reduce individual differences. By ways of paired samples t-test and bar charts of mean scores comparison in 13 variables, the study revealed the relationship between public speaking class anxiety and oral performance.

6.2 Research questions and main findings

6.2.1 The level of public speaking anxiety among Chinese ESL students

As demonstrated above, the results reported that more than 86% of participants were in low anxiety level. Only a few of participants (less than 14%) appeared to be moderately anxious in English classroom. No participant showed a high anxiety in speaking English publicly in the classroom. Although, most of participants showed a low anxiety in public speaking in the classroom, some of them still reported that they felt panic, nervous and confused when they had to speak English. Besides, even they were well prepared, they still felt anxious to speaking in English.

6.2.2 The relationship between public speaking anxiety and second language performance

By conducting Pearson correlations between PSCAS and 6 oral performance criteria, no statistically significant correlation was found, which was not consistent with the findings of previous studies. However, when carrying out ANOVAs, the author found there were some differences among the three subgroups. The students in the lower anxiety subgroup were more likely to create longer and correct sentences and had less grammatical mistakes than those in the moderate anxiety subgroup according to all mean values comparison of 6 oral performance variables. Furthermore, paired samples t-tests were conducted to compare the oral problem between the presentation in a public anxiety context and the presentation in a private context. The findings indicate 4 statistically significant differences between two oral speeches, which hints public speaking anxiety, to some extent, influences students speaking performance. The participants under an anxious public condition, suffered more oral performance problems and made more grammatical mistakes than in a comfortable and private condition without or with less speaking anxiety. Some students were even too panic to deliver a complete sentence but showed their apologies for their unsmooth speech to audience. It indicated that participants in the public context, created less words in CUs, had more mazes, made shorter sentences and delivered more unrelated segments in their English performance.

6.3 Limitations of this study and suggestions for further studies

There are some limitations of the present study. Due to the different attitudes towards delivering presentations and engaging in experiments, some participants appeared to be unwell-prepared both in CELT class and in the private environment. The lack of preparation for presentation may cause that participants forgot what he or she prepared to say and it led to pauses and repetitions. These signs were regarded as oral performance problems, which led to a poor language outcomes. This means the results, to some extent, could be influenced by this factor. It could be better for the researcher to ask participants to control for the amount of preparation before officially presenting.

To create a non-public-anxiety context, participants were required to do a presentation in front of the researcher. The author set this context as a private non-anxiety condition. The participants, however, were easily distracted by the researchers when the researcher moved slightly or looked at them, which was told by participants after the experiments. Participants may still feel anxious to do a presentation in a private environment. This merits future exploration. In a more relaxing condition, for example, with friends in the audience, participants may have a more successful oral performance so that the differences of performance in two condition could be clearer. As for the public context in our study, the CELT classes, students were asked to practice their presentations instead of being assessed. If the oral performance would be assessed by teachers, it could be more suitable for eliciting wider ranges of anxiety than the CELT practice presentations.

Furthermore, due to few male students involved in this study, gender difference was not explored in this study. Thus, in the future research, researchers can recruit female and male participants at the same number. Their public speaking class anxiety level and the influence of that on their oral performance may be different, as demonstrated in Matsuda and Gobel (2004) that gender played an a very important role in the classroom foreign language performance for the first-year students.

According to Scovel (1978), different anxiety measurements would lead to different results in terms of the relationship between language performance and language anxiety. This means the measures used in this study may cause the results which were different from those in previous studies. The anxiety scale the author conducted in this study was PSCAS, which was different from FLCAS that most of previous studies employed. This could be a reason why the author did not find a significant correlation when the author compared the PSCAS and oral performance.

6.4 Implications for research practice

Our findings have some pedagogical implications for the teachers of ESL, but also

for the teachers of Chinese EFL learners. As the results indicated, anxiety seems not to be a serious issue for Chinese advanced ESL learners, but students with higher English-speaking anxiety tended to produce oral performance less successfully. Thus, teachers need make efforts, such as employing effective strategies to reduce students' language anxiety and create a comfortable learning environment. In order to improve students' oral achievement in English and reduce the negative feelings, teachers should take some actions to create a natural classroom environment, as the sources of language anxiety are involved in and be a part of the results of unnatural classroom (Young, 1991). Students could achieve their language learning goals with a positive attitude and genuine interest. Ultimately, it will be helpful to Chinese ESL learners and other English learners.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Informed consent form

Exploring the relationship between learners' public English speaking anxiety and their public speaking performance in class with Chinese ESL students.

Dear Student,

[Author's name] is currently carrying out a research project to investigate whether the English speaking anxiety would affect public speaking performance in class. I am writing to ask if you are willing to take part in the study.

What would this mean for me

The participants' presentations in CELT classes will be recorded. Then, participants will be asked to completed a questionnaire about evaluating their English speaking anxiety after the presentation. Their records and data from questionnaire will be collected and analysed.

The 30 participants who are Chinese postgraduate students enrolled in MA (Master of Arts) TESOL (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages) in University of York will be randomly selected. 30 participants will be required to complete a questionnaire and 16 participants will be randomly selected to take part in the further research, giving presentations. As a few participants will present their presentations in CELT classes each week, their presentations will be recorded in different weeks. The same participants will also be asked to present the same presentation 'in private', i.e. only in front of the researcher, so that different anxiety contexts can be compared. Both the presentations will be recorded, analysed and compared. Once the study is complete, each participant will be given the opportunity to get the results of this research.

Anonymity

The data that you provide (audio recordings and questionnaire responses) will be stored by code number. Any information that identifies you will be stored separately from the data.

Storing and using your data

Data will be stored on a password protected computer. The data will be kept until September,2017 after which time it will be destroyed. The data may be used for future analysis and shared for research or training purposes, but participants will not be identified individually. If you do not want your data to be included in any information shared as a result of this research, please do not sign this consent form.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection and up to one week after the data is collected.

Information about confidentiality

The data that we collect (audio recordings and questionnaire responses) will be used in *anonymous* format. Please indicate on the consent form enclosed with a ☑ if you are happy for this anonymised data to be used in the ways listed. You have the right to request and view any transcripts of your presentations and listen to your recording.

We hope that you will agree to take par. If you have any questions about the study that you would like to ask before giving consent or after the data collection, please feel free to contact [Author's name] by email, or the Chair of Ethics Committee via email education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk

Please keep this information sheet for your own records.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely

Author's name

Exploring the relationship between learners' English speaking anxiety and their public speaking performance in class with Chinese ESL students.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information given to me about the above named research project and I understand that this will involve me taking part as described above.

☐

I understand that the purpose of the research is to explore the relationship between English speaking anxiety and public speaking performance.

☐

I understand that data will be stored securely on a password protected computer and only [Author's name] will have access to any identifiable data. I understand that my identity will be protected by use of a code.

☐

I understand that my data will not be identifiable and the data may be used ….

☐

in publications that are mainly read by university academics

☐

in presentations that are mainly attended by university academics

☐

in publications that are mainly read by the public

☐

in presentations that are mainly attended by the public

☐

freely available online

☐

I understand that data will be kept until September,2017 after which it will be destroyed.

☐

I understand that data could be used for future analysis or other purposes.

☐

I understand that I can withdraw my data at any point during data collection and up to one week after data is collected by contacting the researcher.

☐

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to comment on a written record of my responses by requesting the transcripts from the researcher.

☐

Please initial each box if you are happy to take part in this research.

Signature: Date:

Appendix 2: PSCAS

Item No	Statements adopted with minor adaptation in wordings	Opinion				
		(5) Strongly Agree	(4) Agree	(3) Undecided	(2) Disagree	(1) Strongly Disagree
1	I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English.					
2	I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance.					
3	In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.					
4	I feel confident while I am speaking English.					
5	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.					
6	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.					
7	I get nervous when the English teacher asks me to speak English which I have prepared in advance.					
8	I have no fear of speaking English.					
9	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on.					
10	I feel relaxed while I am speaking English.					
11	It embarrasses me to volunteer to go out first to speak English					
12	I face the prospect of speaking English with confidence.					
13	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English.					
14	I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English.					
15	I dislike using my voice and body expressively while I am speaking English.					
16	I have trouble to coordinate my movements while I am speaking English.					
17	Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.					

Appendix 3: Transcription sample of public presentation in CELT class

Sample:

1. Today, my presentation will take about 10 minutes.
2. And at the end of my presentation, I will answer your questions for 5 minutes.
3. Today, my research topic is the differences between Chinese ESL postgraduates speaking performance in terms of lexical and syntactic complexity in simpler and more complex task.
4. Here I highlighted two places.
5. So what I want to compare is two aspects: lexical complexity and syntactic complexity
6. and I…into two different tasks in simpler and more complex task.
7. I I I elaborate it on this more.
8. So maybe I will talk about my methodology,
9. but I want to talk a little bit about this theories.
10. So, in terms of the simpler and more complex tasks, like, Robinson, he claims that the more complex task or push the speakers to chive… to achieve more complex and accurate linguistic structures, such as syntax …syntactic structures.
11. So I, this is his proposition,
12. because more complex task will more motivate or push us the.. the speakers to perform better.
13. There are also researchers, like Skehan,
14. he claims that because the speaking tasks are more complex,
15. so it is increases the difficulty.
16. So on the contrary, that would results in the decrease in the linguistic complexity and accurary.
17. So that are, basically, that s two opposite propositions.
    [3s] so my methodology, I am going to recruit 50 participants of I…
18. They are from Chinese postgraduate… they are Chinese postgraduates.
19. [sorry, I m a little bit nervous.]
20. so I will divided them into two groups.
21. So Each group will be 25 participants.
22. And all these participants, they have the same IELTS speaking score.

23. And I will ask them to complete a simpler… one group will complete a simpler task…speaking task.

24. The other group will complete a more complicated task.

25. In terms of the simplicity and complexity, the difference are **reasoning. Some gl… what reasoning basically is about the logical thinking.

26. For example, in my research, I will design two tasks.

27. The simpler task, I will ask the participants to talk about the story based on six pictures.

28. And these pictures are in right order, So at the research storyline.

29. You don't… that seems take too much logical thinking.

30. You just, yes, describe them.

31. It is in right order.

Appendix 4: Transcription sample of private presentation

1. hello, everyone,

2. I m [NAME] from the department of education and studying MA TESOL.

3. Today I d like to share with you my proposal research.

4. As you can see, the title is Chinese university students attitudes towards native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers.

5. And aim is to find the aim is to investigate Chinese college students views on these two kinds of teachers and find out the reasons behind their attitudes.

6. You may be wondering why I choose this as my research topic,

7. so before I explain the reasons to you, I would like to tell you the structure of my presentation first.

8. So the talk is divided into four sections.

9. In the first section, I will talk about the background and literature review.

10. In the second section, I will tell you my research questions.

11. And in the third section, I will describe a little bit about my methodology.

12. And in the last section, I will be dealing with questions.

13. So if you have any question, I would be happy to answer them at the end of my dissertation.

14. So let s start with the background and literature review.

15. Teaching English as a second or a foreign language has a long history which can date back to 15th century.

16. And the first non-native English speaking teacher recorded in the world appears to be a Frenchman named Gabriel Meurier.

17. As English has become a world language, the learners of English outnumber the speakers of English,

18. so it s not hard to imagine that the majority of English teachers in the world are non-native English speaking teacher.

19. However, the their capacities often questioned

20. because it s commonly believed that the non the native English speaking teachers are better qualified than the non-native English speaking teachers, which is referred as the "native English fallacy".

21. According to X, ninety, nineteen ninety-two, ideal teacher is a native speaker.

22. Somebody with native proficiency in English who can serve as a model for pupils.

23. So actually in many countries, in some schools and educational institutions, the their employers seem to have some preference for native English English na native English speaking teachers.

24. Some language teaching positions even only consider native speakers

25. because they regard native speakers as a model of the language.

26. So as a future non-native English teacher in, I m really worried and concerned about the issue.

27. What do the students think?

28. Do the students really think that the native speakers are better than the non-native ones?

29. So actually before I came here, I have to admit that at that time I was in China and I had a little prejudice against non-native English speaking teachers

30. because I though their accent were not standard.