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ESL Students' Language Anxiety in In-Class Oral Presentations

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ESL STUDENTS' LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN IN-CLASS ORAL PRESENTATIONS

A Thesis submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English
by
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Approved by
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APPROVAL OF THESIS/DISSERTATION

We, the faculty supervising the work of **Yusi Chen,** affirm that the **thesis, "ESL Students'
Language Anxiety in In-Class Oral Presentations,"** meets the high academic standards for
original scholarship and creative work established by the **English MA-TESOL** and the **College of
Liberal Arts**. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the
Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signature, we approve the manuscript for
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ABSTRACT

This case study aims to explore connections between ESL students' speaking-in-class anxiety and their presentation performance, factors causing oral anxiety during presentations, and strategies to regulate L2 students' speaking anxiety in presentations. Findings of this research contribute to the investigation of speaking-in-class anxiety from non-English major L2 students. Three Chinese ESL students enrolled in the INTO program at Marshall University individually gave two presentations in speaking classes. Triangulated data sources were collected to delve into three research questions. The results suggest that L2 students' anxiety forms mental blocks during presentations, but it has less influence on their presentation performance. Based on this relationship, internal factors from participants and environmental factors from their physical contexts causing language anxiety are investigated with relevant possible coping strategies. These findings further shed some pedagogical insights on presentation task designs, teachers' scaffolding of ESL students' presentation skills, and students' self-regulation strategies on their oral anxiety.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety has been explored by psychologists and linguists since the 1970s. A large number of research findings regarding anxieties from the perspective from psychology and linguistics have contributed to foreign language teaching pedagogy. Anxiety from the perspective of the former is defined as subjective feelings relating an arousal of automatic nervous system, such as tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry (Spielberger, 1983). These subjective anxious feelings also carry over into the area of language. For example, linguists regard anxiety as "a state of apprehension, a vague fear" in students' language learning (Scovel, 1978). Being affected by vague fear, learners usually shape affective blocks in the process of developing target language proficiency. During this learning process, severe anxious reaction is formed because of negative learning experiences and perceptions from students. Such effects of foreign language anxiety could not easily be described or defined because the general approach to identifying foreign language anxiety was not explored adequately. This problem has been dealt with classifications and descriptions of two approaches related to language anxiety from Horwitz and Young (1991): language anxiety is a transfer of anxiety from another domain, and something about language learning makes language anxiety a unique experience. Grounded on both the approaches, methods to define language anxiety have been established.

The establishment of the two general approaches builds the foundation for researchers concerned with the effect of language anxiety on second language (L2) production. According to these two general approaches, language anxiety can be a unique experience,

which moves from other domains (Horwitz &Young, 1991b). The first approach shows that language anxiety stems from another area, such as test anxiety and speaking anxiety. A number of studies conducted on anxiety and language learning with this "anxiety transfer approach" have shown positive, negative and near zero correlations between anxiety and L2 language learning in French, German, and Spanish (Cited in Young, 1999).

On the other hand, the second approach shows that general anxiety can be eventually delineated into distinct types. Thus, language anxiety can be identified as the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused in second language acquisition (Young, 1999). Although the two approaches were created to describe anxiety, early studies yielded conflicting results regarding language anxiety (Scovel, 1978). Grounded on the issues surrounding language anxiety above, an increasing number of researches have been conducted to prove that language anxiety results from communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation by others, and test anxiety (Horwitz et.al., 1986; Aida, 1994; Mak, 2011). Although these three language anxiety sources have been extensively researched, language anxiety still tends to be regarded as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, behaviors regarding classroom language learning from the unique language learning process" (Horwitz et. al., 1986) rather than "simple transfer of anxieties to the language classroom" (Scovel, 1978). These emphases on the effect of language anxiety such as beliefs and behaviors have attracted researchers to explore its connections to the process of learning. Research findings from these studies were beneficial for the development of language in the classroom.

On the basis of Horwitz and her associates' theories, a model was built by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) to investigate the development of language anxiety during learning

processes. This model is supported by psychological theories to show that language anxiety occurs when a student acquires the second language. Another study conducted by Aida (1994) in L2 settings tested Horwitz and associates' construct of foreign language anxiety by adapting Horwitz's FLCAS (Foreign Language Anxiety Scale). Her results proved the validity of FLCAS through revealed two crucial foreign language anxiety components: speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

Similar to Aida's research, studies have looked at speaking anxiety as a major factor determining the oral performance of ESL Japanese students. For example, Samimy and Tabuse (1992) were engaged in FLCAS to explore language anxiety in the area of speaking. Another study conducted with speaking anxiety in a Chinese EFL setting examined students' different English levels, showing the participating students to have different levels of speaking anxiety when they speak English in the classroom (Liu 2006). The research has shown that second language students suffer different levels of anxiety in speaking classes. Second/foreign language anxieties have negative effects on students' attitudes toward target language study.

However, language anxiety is also associated with positive effects as well as with negative ones. These facilitating and debilitating effects of anxiety inspired Kleinmann (1977) to find that the facilitating anxiety has a significant relationship with students' oral production of difficult linguistic English structures, such as passive sentence structures and infinitive complements. Although these students have extreme anxiety, they are passively encouraged to develop their oral production under the pressure of complex English structures. In order to figure out the effects of facilitating and debilitating anxieties, factors causing anxieties have

to be examined. Thus, studies associated with facilitating and debilitating effects triggered more researchers to explore factors causing speaking anxiety in the second language learning context, as well as connections between speaking anxiety and students' oral performance. Five factors causing speaking-in-class anxiety: speech anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, fear of failing the class, uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers and negative attitudes towards the English classroom were found in a case study conducted based on FLCAS (Mak, 2011). Although these factors were analyzed and discussed to deepen understandings of speaking anxiety in general speaking classrooms, specific speaking activity-related anxieties have not yet been systematically explored.

On the other hand, another speaking anxiety scale has been created on the basis of FLCAS (Woodrow, 2006). Woodrow combined his Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (SLSAS) with English for academic purposes (EAP) classes to investigate correlations between second language speaking variables and oral performance based on the facilitating and debilitating effects. The quantitative findings from Woodrow's (2006) research also discusses that ESL students get anxious about presentations, but it does not have a significant relationship with their oral performance. Although Woodrow focuses on the relationship between in-class presentations and oral performance from a quantitative perspective, detailed analyses on this kind of relationship have not yet been provided by other researchers. In order to fill this gap, this study is conducted to explore connections between L2 speaking anxiety and in-class presentation performance, factors causing oral anxiety during presentations, and strategies to regulate speech anxiety in in-class settings.

In the U.S. EAP context where oral English practice is an essential curriculum

component, ESL teachers widely adopt presentations to emphasize the importance of communicating skills in the classroom (King, 2002). In order to improve students' communication skills, competent presentation skills in English are taught through the student-centered teaching approach to assist ESL teachers assessing students' oral proficiency. ESL students who improve their speaking proficiency in student-centered classes usually take on active roles to develop communication skills. In this kind of communicative speaking classes, ESL students develop their target language proficiency by using peer assessment in oral presentations (Otoshi &Heffernan, 2008). Peer assessment allows students to achieve a good presentation performance as well as get inspired through peer communication.

In contrast, students, instead of actively participating in various presentation activities, sometimes have negative perceptions on such presentation activities. These students are overwhelmed with communication skills because they do not always get the intended outcome and their speaking skills fossilize in a certain stage (Miles, 2014). This situation is more obvious in Asian countries, because Asian students view presentations as face-threatening activity (King, 2002). In order to change students' perceptions on presentations and reduce their language anxiety, awareness of establishing a low-threat learning environment in second language acquisition has been raised.

Additionally, oral presentations have been perceived as a time-consuming project with no guarantee of a satisfactory performance (King, 2002). Thus, it is a question whether presentations should be adopted into EFL context, especially for Asian students. Findings of King's (2002) research confirmed that an oral presentation can be a beneficial and enjoyable activity for both teachers and students expecting a short break from textbooks and

examinations. However, King's findings are based on the Chinese EFL context that mainly

advocates teacher-centered teaching approaches in class while student-centered approaches

are widely used in U.S. ESL speaking classrooms. The connections between ESL students'

speaking anxiety and in-class presentations are barely discussed and analyzed by previous

researchers, although presentations triggering student anxiety have been mentioned in the

Chinese EFL context (King, 2002).

In order to explore whether a presentation should be utilized as an essential activity in

ESL speaking curriculums, this research is conducted to investigate possible connections

between ESL students' speaking anxiety and presentation performance. It further aims to

examine factors causing speech anxiety during presentations and anxiety-coping strategies

related to ESL students' presentations. One possible contribution of this research to the area

of TESOL is that the findings may have a new and positive effect on L2 teaching strategies,

presentation task designs and students' self-regulation of L2 speaking anxiety during in-class

presentations.

Overview and Purpose of the Study

This case study is designed to investigate connections between ESL students'

speaking anxiety and in-class presentation performance, factors related to speech anxiety and

presentations as well as anxiety-coping strategies for both ESL teachers and students during

in-class presentations. This research examines the speaking anxiety and presentation

performance of 3 Chinese ESL students at the INTO program, Marshall University.

These Chinese ESL students enrolled in listening and speaking class in the Pathway

program are required to give two presentations individually during the semester. An

increasing number of international students study at U.S. universities. Chinese ESL students occupy the largest percentage in this group. In addition, Chinese EFL students regard in-class presentations as a face-threatening activity which causes a high level of anxiety in the classroom (King, 2002). Thus, the exploration of current research topic might reveal factors causing ESL students' language anxiety during presentations, especially for Asian ESL students.

The data from two presentations were collected using triangulated data sources: pre-task questionnaire, post-task interview, observation, and teacher evaluations. Specifically, I drew on FLCAS (Horwitz, 1986) and designed five-point Likert-scale questionnaires to investigate participants' perceptions of their language anxiety prior to the presentations. I also collected teacher evaluations of students' two presentation performances. Semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted to further explore possible factors causing speaking anxiety. Furthermore, I conducted interviews complementing observation notes in order to identify the strategies students use to regulate in-class-speaking anxiety during presentations. Focusing on a qualitative analysis, interviews and observation were analyzed based on the constant-comparative-method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to explore factors and regulating strategies. What is more, I holistically compared the anxiety scales obtained from questionnaires and quality of performance indicated in teacher evaluations to derive potential connections between student presentation performances and speaking anxiety. The present study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What are the connections between students' L2 anxiety and their in-class oral presentation performance?

2. What factors may cause students' language anxiety in oral presentations?

3. What strategies, if any, do students use to regulate their language anxiety in oral presentations?

This case study aims to explore ESL students' speaking anxiety in in-class presentations. It contributes to an understanding of effects, causes, and regulating strategies regarding L2 anxiety in oral presentations. This study would shed pedagogical insights on oral presentation task designs, teachers' scaffolding, and students' self-regulation on L2 speaking anxiety during presentations.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents a literature review on the language anxiety and in-class presentation activity. This chapter supplies a background and insightful ideas for current research to analyze data regarding L2 in-class speaking anxiety. Chapter 3 elaborates the research methods including the case study framework, contexts, participants and data collection procedures. In chapter 4, the results of the analysis techniques described in chapter 3 are presented and organized based on three research questions. The last chapter begins with a discussion of data analysis results and concludes with some implications and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a background and literature review on ESL students' speaking anxiety in in-class presentation settings. Section 2.1 will focus on a historical perspective of language anxiety in the language learning process. The purpose is to highlight the discovery process of language anxiety in various disciplines. Section 2.2 will describe the conceptualization of language anxiety and the theoretical framework grounded on language anxiety. Additionally, section 2.3 will introduce developments of language anxiety that triggered researchers' focus on speaking anxiety in second language acquisition. This section will be followed by section 2.4 that will elaborate on the application of presentations in current ESL and EFL classroom as well as the relationship with language anxiety based on previous literature. Section 2.5, the final section, will look at previous studies to offer some insightful ideas for this research project and current issues related to ESL students' speaking anxiety, and in-class presentation will be discussed in this research project.

Language Anxiety in the Language Learning Process

Anxieties have attracted researchers to conduct studies both in psychology and linguistics areas, the results of which have contributed to the second language learning for decades. Researchers in both areas started to focus on language learning since the mid-twentieth century. However, research in both disciplines supported a form of instruction rooted in surface-level of language learning (Young, 1999). To explore the deep level of language learning, explorations of differences and similarities between different languages guided researchers to focus on foreign language learning.

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Language learning was regarded as predicted and controlled processes by previous researchers. Skinner (1957) considered that language learning is controlled practice of verbal operant under designed schedules of reinforcement. This notion considers the language learning process as verbally controlled behavior neglecting to emphasize learners' cognitive processes. The advocates of mechanical mimicry drills, pattern drills and pronunciation practice based on the Audiolingual Method (ALM) also failed to recognize that students have the ability to "think" in their learning process. Although ALM was adopted as the major language teaching strategy until the 1970s because the integration of the four language learning skills has assisted learners to master a foreign language more efficiently, the method is a mechanical drill to build unpleasant experiences in foreign language learning (Shrum & Glisan, 1994).

Human acts were the focus of research in both psychology and linguistics during the 1950s. In the following decades, studies related to foreign language learning in both the two areas was conducted beyond the surface level (Young, 1999). Psychologists extended their research to unobservable cognitive behaviors while linguists deepened their understanding of language. While the limitation of mechanical language learning did not explain appropriate ways learners acquire languages, Chomsky hypothesized the existence of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in human beings to explain the acquisition of syntactic structures of language. LAD is the hypothesized language faculty innate in human beings to acquire languages (Chomsky, 1986). This hypothesis stated that humans are born with the innate ability to acquire language, which challenged the behaviorism-based language learning. The development of Chomsky's notion was promoted by findings from Richard (1988). Language

learning was seen as a process that developed from the way humans constitute their linguistic surroundings and from their place in specific environments (Richard, 1988). The statement from Richard argued that previous research had ignored effects from interactive human society and surrounding environments in language acquisition processes. The interactive Schema theory which supported language learning is a process involving learners' pre-existing experiences (sociolinguistic and cultural knowledge) and new knowledge (target languages) (Bransford, 1979). This theory not only explained the system of language learning existing in the human mind, but also emphasized external environments acting as essential factors to affect language learning.

Cognition theory attracted researchers' attention on the emotional part of language learning since the 1980s. Emotions are the crucial difference between the human mind and lifeless creatures, and they are human's subjective unconscious product of information processing (cognition) (LeDoux, 1996). That means emotions are independent of cognition, which is not easily regulated by the human mind. For the same reason, when learners process target language knowledge, the positive or negative emotions would affect language processing in their mind. These brain and psychology research findings built a foundation for studies investigating how mind works in the foreign language acquisition area.

However, most studies began to explore "why" and "how" emotions have influences on foreign language learning (Young, 1999). Research conducted by Schumann and Schumann (1977) provided implications for the exploration of "why" and "how" learner emotions affect language learning. In their research, the relationship between language learners' perceptions and learning environment had mainly been investigated. Research

results showed that learners form negative attitudes for their learning environments because

of the differences in teachers' agendas. During the same period, Dulay and Burt's research

also examined "how" emotions impact L2 students' language learning process. Emotions are

filters in the language learning, which is regarded as obstacles for language learners in

improving their language proficiency (Dulay & Burt, 1977). As representing human emotion

better than any other, anxieties also hinder developments of students' foreign/second

language acquisition. "If anxiety is high, the filter is up and information does not enter the

brain's processing system" (Dulay & Burt, 1977). It is research of this kind that contributed

to the development both in psychology and linguistics to include anxiety as a legitimate part

of their second language acquisition research.

Researchers in psychology and linguistics conducted anecdotal and empirical

evidence-established theoretical frameworks to describe and explore language anxiety during

the 1990s (Young, 1999). Horwitz, Young and MacIntyre are the earliest researchers who

built theoretical frameworks for language anxiety based on foreign/second language

classrooms. To define abstract language anxiety, Horwitz and Young (1991) explored two

approaches: "1. Language anxiety is a transfer of anxiety from other domain and 2.something

about language learning makes language anxiety a unique experience". These two approaches

built the foundation for researchers who conducted studies to identity and classify foreign

language anxiety. On the other hand, MacIntyre placed language anxiety into a broader

horizon to explain its differences with other forms of anxiety. It contributed to the exploration

about cognitive, affective, social and personal effects of language anxiety (Young, 1999).

Based on frameworks supplied by previous experts, subsequent researchers studied the

relationships between language anxiety and second language acquisition as well as the methods to reduce language anxiety in the classroom.

The Conceptualization and Theoretical Framework of Language Anxiety

Language anxiety was a highly discussed research topic during the 1990s (MacIntyre, 1999). Studies regarding language anxiety were first conducted from communication apprehension and text anxiety perspectives (Daly & McCroskey, 1984). Thus, some researchers perceived language anxiety as an excuse for students not participating in language classes. Findings examined by Campbell and Ortiz (1991) argued that language anxiety is not an excuse for students not to enjoy language classrooms and that teachers should be alert to negative anxiety effects on students' language learning process. Language anxiety effects on language learning process guided researchers to figure out the nature of language anxiety, language reactions, methods reducing language anxiety and anxieties in response to other specific aspects of language learning (Horwitz, 2010).

Language anxiety as an abstract psychological phenomenon was measured through questionnaires, interviews, and self-reports by previous qualitative and quantitate research. Although correlational research regarding language anxiety could not demonstrate the cause and effect effectively, it assists researchers to find two or more anxiety variables moving into the same or opposite directions (MacIntyre, 1999). In addition, correlational research was beneficial for an understanding of the differences and similarities among constructs of language anxiety (Young, 1999). Negative correlational findings among language anxiety and French learning variables explored by Gardner, Clement, Smythe, and Smythe (1979) established a French Class Anxiety Scale. Based on this French anxiety scale, subsequent

studies designed language anxiety scales associated with second/foreign language learning.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) created Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to identify foreign language anxiety as a distinct variable in foreign language learning. The theoretical framework established by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) improved the limitation of Scovel's research project (1978) that lacked a clear relationship between anxiety and foreign language achievement. Additionally, three primary sources explored by Horwitz and associates (1986) classified language anxiety into three general categories: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation by others, and text anxiety. These three potential factors of anxieties are sources for FLCAS (1986) to discriminate one type of anxiety from others (Mak, 2011). The FLCAS has thirty three items that adopted a five-point Likert scale. This framework is the essential part of the research by Horwitz and associates, which revealed second language students' learning performance affected by significant language anxiety. Grounded on the framework of FLCAS, a questionnaire was designed by Young (1990) to examine various sources triggering language anxiety, such as in class and speaking-oriented practices.

The theoretical framework established by Horwitz and Young built a foundation to define language anxiety as well as analyze connections between language anxieties and second language learning while relationships between language anxiety and other types of anxiety were intensely discussed. Endler (1980) got inspirations from Horwitz's research on perceived language anxiety from a broader psychological perspective. There are three general categories of language anxiety in Endler's study (1980): trait, situation-specific, and state anxiety. People who have higher trait anxiety are typically nervous people lacking emotional

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stability (Goldberg, 1993). The second situation-specific anxiety means that people get anxious only in specific situations, such as test anxiety and speech anxiety. The last state anxiety refers to "the moment to moment experience of anxiety" (MacIntyre, 1999), which also means temporary anxious feelings. Psychologists found that state anxiety has an effect on cognition and behavior because it arouses more sensitive automatic nervous system (Caver & Scheier, 1986). These three types of anxieties were adopted into research to analyze relationships between second language learners and different subtypes of anxieties. Second/foreign language learners with a high level of language anxiety are easily affected by the moment to moment anxious feelings while FL/L2 learners with a lower level of language anxiety do not experience state anxiety frequently (MacIntyre, 1999). Researchers who support the notion above record and analyze experiences regarding anxiety in second language contexts because they regard language anxiety as a situation-specific form of anxiety (Young, 1999). In order to measure scales of this situation-specific form of anxiety in the second/ foreign language learning process, various questionnaire were created by previous research, such as the FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986), Pappamihiel's (2002) English language anxiety scale (ELAS), and Saito et al.'s (1999) foreign language reading anxiety scale (FLRAS).

On the other hand, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b) adopted a factor analysis to explore relations among various anxiety scales. There are 23 scales designed to present various forms of anxiety. Research findings also categorized anxiety into three groups based on factors causing anxiety. The first and second scales are general anxiety and state anxiety, while the last scale is language anxiety. Language anxiety is different from the former two,

which has no correlation with anxiety factors (MacIntyre, 1999). Thus, language anxiety is separated from the language use anxiety, language classroom anxiety and language test anxiety. For instance, a student who feels anxious about English learning may not get anxious about other subjects such as math and history. In order to develop an understanding of the construct of language anxiety, MacIntyre and Gardner's research grouped various anxieties as well as separate the relationship between language anxiety and other forms of anxieties. Similar previous studies drawn on from the relations between language anxiety and target language learning as well as different types of anxieties elaborated the conceptualization of the construct (Young, 1999). The conceptualization of the language anxiety construct raised teachers' awareness of reducing students' language anxiety. Therefore, the focus of subsequent research has primarily been on students' former language learning experiences and strategies adopted into the classroom to reduce their language anxiety.

Developments of the Language Anxiety

The research mentioned above examined the potential origins, sources and the construct of language anxiety categorized on the establishment of the theoretical framework, explanations of students' language learning experience, and interviews with students. Subsequent research tended to develop findings from the previous research. For instance, based on previous research from Horwitz et al. (1986) and Young (1986), MacIntyre and Gardner (1999) explored the ways in which language anxiety can develop. Developments of state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety contribute to the formation of language anxiety (MacIntyre, 1999). L2 students' anxiety in specific language learning areas, such as pronunciation and grammar would develop into moment-to-moment state anxiety if foreign

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students feel comfortable in making mistakes in certain language learning areas. This moment to moment anxious feeling in a specific single context is regarded as the construct of language anxiety. This psychologically based language anxiety construct also works for other similar situation-specific language anxieties, such as public speaking anxiety and test anxiety (Beatty & Andriate, 1985).

In addition, this construct also explains differences between language anxiety and other types of anxiety. Students who get involved with daily language use anxiety experienced similar but different nervous feelings in their language examinations. Even students' language anxiety cannot directly determine second language learning performance, because other factors, such as students' personality and learning environments affect their second language acquisition (Beatty & Andriate, 1985). Variables such as personality and environments have been examined to investigate their correlation with language anxiety. Skehan (1991) studied connections between students' personality and language anxiety. Research findings show that extrovert language learners enjoy the communication with less anxiety while introvert students get anxious about target language learning. Introvert students who do well in other courses, such as math and science, may also experience intense language anxiety, but they could develop strategies to regulate their behavior (MacIntyre, 1995). Although these findings were revealed in students' first language area, it reminded later researchers that language learning has distinct differences from other learning situations (MacIntyre, 1995). Language anxiety was regarded as the anxiety that differs from other types of anxiety in the classroom.

Several early researchers had previously realized these differences. For instance, one

of the earliest research (Kleinmann, 1977) relating language anxiety recruited English-speaking learners of Indo-European languages investigated the difficulty in expressing abstract language anxiety, while Aida (1994) tested the language anxiety construct founded by Horwitz and associates (1986) verified the validity and reliability of FLCAS as well as factors causing foreign language anxiety .

Subsequent researchers refined language anxiety research into more specific areas, such as speaking, reading, and writing. FLCAS and FLRAS (Saito et al., 1999) were both adopted to measure self-confidence as a factor affecting students' speaking and reading anxiety in foreign language learning contexts (Matsude & Gobel, 2002). Results of these two scales suggested that teachers should play a crucial role in assisting ESL students to enhance their language learning confidence so that speaking and reading anxiety could be reduced in the classroom. Additionally, correlations between second language speaking variables and oral performance were examined on the basis of the notion that relates two-dimensional language anxiety construct to language learning (Woodrow, 2006). Although results found correlations between foreign language speaking anxiety and some speaking activities based on the two-dimensional construct, Woodrow's research mainly focused on the outside of the classroom and speaking variables were not analyzed in a detailed manner. Findings of Woodrow (2006)'s research showed that ESL students' oral anxiety reflects their everyday communicating environment, and that performing in English in front of native speakers or classmates is the most anxious activity for ESL students.

Findings of a number of subsequent researchers claimed that the source for L2 students' oral anxiety stems from speaking in front of other people because students feel that

their proficiency level is not yet on par with that of target language native speakers. Thus, foreign language learning has a potential to "embarrass students themselves, frustrate their expression, and to challenge their self-esteem than other learning activity" (MacIntyre, 1999).

In China, ESL students would exhibit speaking-in-class anxiety when they participate in inter-personal conversations (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Furthermore, 12 thematic variables with Chinese L2 learners were founded by Yan and Horwitz (2008) to emphasize that L2 students get anxious about their self-expression in front of others. These findings exhibit ESL/EFL learners suffering language anxiety when they communicate with others.

In sum, previous research has demonstrated that language anxiety differs from other types of anxiety by exploring and analyzing sources and origins of language anxiety. After identifying correlations to and differences from other types of anxiety, researchers narrowed down language anxiety (Horwitz, 1986; Endler, 1980; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989) as well as investigate effects of various anxieties on foreign language learning. Thus, speaking anxiety as a concern in L2 areas is frequently carried into research (Matsuda & Gobel, 2002; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Liu, 2006). The origin of speaking anxiety for L2 learners with different language proficiency levels has been examined many times, and relations between oral anxiety and other speaking variables have been investigated by serval researchers. Fewer experts have focused on factors causing oral anxiety in-/out- class, while few researchers have conducted their studies exploring factors and coping strategies for ESL students' in-class speaking anxiety associated with specific speaking activities such as in-class presentations.

Previous Research and Current Issues about In-class Presentations

The presentation as an alternative form of assessment has been widely adopted into

ESL/EFL classrooms because communication skills are emphasized in teaching and learning. In EFL contexts, especially for students who major in business, proficient presentation skills in English lead to their future career. Therefore, students take presentation classes as a regular part of degree programs before preparing for the work or beginning a new career (Nakamura, 2002).

On the other hand, oral presentations are used in L2 classrooms to assist students with varying English proficiency levels to reach fluent oral proficiency. However, students also get silent or complain when oral presentations become part of regular teaching in the classroom (King, 2002). The reason for the silence of L2 students during presentations is that students feel presentations are a time-consuming activity that does not help them improve oral proficiency level, triggering language anxiety in the classroom (King, 2002). The call for creating a low-anxiety teaching and learning environment led teachers and scholars to have doubts about applying oral presentations to L2 class.

Research findings from King (2002) support that in-class presentations should be practiced in L2 classrooms because oral activities are beneficial and enjoyable for language learners. It also provides an opportunity for L2 students to get out of dull and obscure textbooks, although students complain that presentations are time-consuming. In order to reduce L2 students' complaints about in-class presentations, some researchers utilize relevant teaching strategies to improve the quality of presentations as effective oral activities in speaking classes.

Adopting peer-evaluations into oral presentations, EFL/ESL students take active roles in developing their oral language. For example, getting feedback from peers is regarded as a

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crucial part in oral activities, especially for presentations, because of interactions between learners and their classmates. (Price & O'Donovan, 2003). In contrast to assessments done by teachers only, students' performance can be assessed by their classmates in peer assessment (Otoshi & Heffernen, 2008). However, this strategy might arouse students' language anxiety due to the fact that the source for L2 students' speaking anxiety is to speak in front of peer classmates and teachers. Thus, some researchers tended to find effective strategies to reduce students' speaking anxiety in front of classmates and teachers (King, 2002; Webster, 2002; Mile, 2014). These research findings show that by changing teachers' role from an authoritative expert to that of a facilitator of learning, students' language learning could be less anxiety-inducing with more flexibility. For example, King (2002) considered teachers' role in class and suggested that the best way to reduce students' public speaking anxiety is talking to and comforting students by using the techniques from psychotherapy and speech communication literature. This strategy is beneficial for students who give presentations in their native language, but for ESL/EFL students who present in front of all classmates in the target language, it may not be useful because possible factors causing L2 students' speaking anxiety still need to be examined and verified.

Yet from a more functional linguistic perspective, Halliday's genre approach has been used as a basis for presentation courses teaching genre-specific language features and other context-specific items (Webster, 2002). However, if students are taught with this teaching method, students would need to master presentation skills under different contexts, such as business conferences and academic forums. This teaching method might be hard for L2 teachers to use in lower level speaking classrooms without a clear language instruction. In

order to design an effective and anxiety-reducing presentation in the classroom, Miles (2014) emphasized that L2 students' language teaching purposes should be clarified to support teachers attempting to improve their instruction of speaking. Because of the necessity to establish a low anxiety teaching environment (King, 2002), the connection between speaking anxiety and presentations, factors causing oral anxiety and coping strategies regarding speech anxiety during presentations need to be explored.

Insights from Previous Research

The early research conducted by Horwitz (1986) showed that L2 students have frequently been concerned about speaking anxiety because it builds a mental block against foreign language learning. In order to reduce students' speaking anxiety in the language learning process, it is necessary to figure out the way in which anxiety has been classified and ideal methods to reduce such anxieties. Thus, the study by Horwitz (1986) built a foundation for subsequent experts and scholars to identify the general categories of language anxiety though designed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Guided by this well-known theoretical framework, an increasing number of researchers paid attention to connections between language anxiety and language learning in in-class context (Aida, 1994; Kitano, 2001), factors causing L2 students' language anxiety in various language situations (Dewaele & Furnham, 2008; Woodrow, 2009) and strategies to reduce foreign language anxiety (Liu, 2006; Horwitz & Luo, 2009).

These researchers not only argue that speaking is a language learning skill that is frequently associated with language anxiety, but also measure connections between speaking anxiety and language speaking variables; even a mixed study conducted by Woodrow (2006)

shows that there are no significant relationships between oral presentations and oral performance. Woodrow (2006) challenged the opinion referred to by King (2002) that L2 students cannot have a good presentation performance when they experience speaking anxiety and perceive presentations as face-threating oral activities. Heated discussions related to connections between in-class oral presentations and speaking anxiety indicate that its validity still needs to be examined and measured by future researchers. Similarly, Liu (2006) investigated connections between language anxiety and oral English activities based on Chinese EFL students' different English proficiencies. Liu's findings indicate that these students felt less anxious about using English when increasingly exposed to oral English. Liu's research provides helpful insights from two perspectives: the identification of different oral activities causing EFL students' in-class language anxiety and change in language anxiety with EFL students' language learning experiences. In addition, her research further shows that EFL students get more anxious about individual activities than group activities.

In order to improve students' communication skills, in-class presentations are usually adopted by teachers in EFL/ESL contexts to improve L2 students' target language skills. Realizing the importance of oral presentations, King (2002) conducted a study to examine the essential role of presentations in the classroom associated with brief coping strategies to assist L2 students to reduce in-class speaking anxiety. Although some coping strategies had been explored by other researchers before, they are strategies to decrease language/speaking anxiety for other purposes, such as public speech anxiety coping strategies and oral text anxiety coping strategies.

So far, some coping strategies have been explored to reduce in-class presentation

with minimum positive effects. For instance, peer assessment has been used to improve presentations as effective oral activities in the classroom because students play an active role in the learning process (Otoshi & Heffernen, 2008). However, this method neglects that speaking in front of other people is a source for L2 students' speaking anxiety (MacIntyre, 1999). Assessed by classmates based on the foreign language speaking performance in front of their classmates and teacher, L2 students might regard presentations as extreme face-threating activities that cause severe anxiety reactions. Although this method suggests improving presentations through the student-centered teaching strategy, its main focus still needs to be further enhanced because of the neglecting of L2 students' anxiety problems, individual differences and culture.

In sum, previous research looking into language anxiety has been conducted to help L2 students overcome their "mental block" (Horwitz, 1986) and improve their language proficiency. In-class speaking anxiety is a major language anxiety that impedes students' oral proficiency, and creates unpleasant learning experiences. The connections between speaking anxiety and L2 students' oral performance have been extensively discussed by experts and scholars who argue for further research to provide more pedagogical ideas and suggestions to deepen various aspects of language learning anxiety. Although factors causing L2 students' oral anxiety have been investigated for a long time, factors causing ESL students to get anxious during presentations have not been examined in details. Moreover, effective oral anxiety coping strategies regarding in-class presentations still need to be examined. In order to fill these gaps, I conducted this research to discuss connections between ESL students' speaking anxiety and oral presentation performance, figure out factors may lead ESL students

get anxious during presentations as well as offer some constructive oral anxiety regulation

strategies for ESL students to improve speaking proficiency and regulate oral anxiety in

presentations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

I chose qualitative case study to explore the connections, factors and coping strategies regarding ESL students' speaking anxiety as well as in-class presentations due to the fact that this research project involves a group of ESL students, their social situation and interactions. It matches the intent of qualitative research that to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group and interaction (Locke, Spirduso, & Solverman, 1987). In addition, I collected data from the Listening & Speaking Class of the INTO Institution at Marshall University during the spring 2015 semester. These data were analyzed with qualitative techniques to identify possible factors and coping strategies associated with five scale post-questionnaires results to measure ESL students' anxiety scales deducing the potential connections between speaking anxiety and in-class presentation. This chapter will mainly elaborate research context, research sites, participants, and theoretical frameworks adopted in this study. In addition, the researcher's role will also be mentioned to declare my perceptions and positions of this research project because it necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and bias at the outset of the study (Miller, 1992).

Qualitative Case Study

Case study is a strategy of inquiry to enable researchers explore in depth a program, activity and one or more individuals (Stake, 1995). There are several advantages for choosing a case study approach to conduct this research. First, case studies are ideal methodologies to collect and analyze authentic data explaining the nature or source of phenomena and deepening understandings of phenomena to deduce the potential general factors, connections

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or issues (cited in Angus, 2014). As an abstract phenomenon, the nature, sources and effects of language anxiety were examined by previous researchers mainly adopted qualitative methodologies. Data relating this abstract phenomenon were collected under the authentic speaking context while the connections, factors and coping strategies were deduced through data to reach the study objectives. Thus, case study is the appropriate methodology to investigate the connections, factors, and coping strategies of the abstract speaking anxiety.

In addition, case studies are bounded by the time and activity to understand a particular social situation (Stake, 1995). An increasing number of ESL students study at universities in the U. S. These students belong to a special social group with different educational backgrounds than students educated in the American school system; in many U. S. school districts, students begin speaking in front of the class in informal reports and information sharing as early as Kindergarten. By contrast, most ESL students have significantly less presentation experiences; even Asian ESL students regard in-class presentations as a face threatening activity. To conduct research regarding the speaking anxiety in presentations involving specific L2 students' social group, the case study should be chosen because it not only matches the purpose of case study, but also is convenient for the data collection and analysis.

Thirdly, I mainly focus on students' speaking anxiety scale associated with presentation performance, factors causing students' speaking anxiety in the presentations and coping strategies they used to reduce their oral anxiety in presentations. These results and findings were analyzed and elaborated through collected data by adopting unstructured observation, semi-structured interviews, teacher evaluations and peer evaluations. Using

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qualitative research methods is more appropriate than quantitative research methods in this research project, because of the interpretative nature of qualitative research (Creswell, 1999). Based on my participants' interpretations related to their speaking anxiety during in-class presentations, I made the interpretations of what I have seen and understood. Thus, the findings and implications have been induced and elaborated contributing to an understanding of the research questions in this project.

Research Context

The research sites for this study are located in INTO Marshall University of the United States. INTO Marshall is located in Huntington, West Virginia, which is a supportive community for international students to improve academic and English language skills. International students who hope to study in the U.S. but have slightly lower standardized test scores than Marshall University's requirements would firstly study at INTO Marshall to improve English proficiency, prepare their degree studies as well as adapt to American campus life.

Although INTO Marshall was established later than the other INTO institutions in the U.S., a constant increasing number of international students would like access to all of the academic, social and cultural resources and activities at INTO Marshall University. The majority of international students at INTO Marshall come from China while others from Korea, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh, South Arabia and so on. According to the pie chart below (Figure 1), Chinese ESL students at INTO Marshall comprise 48.1% of the total number of INTO students in spring, 2015. Chinese ESL students are representatives of these international students who study at INTO Marshall Institution. Thus, I recruited Chinese ESL

students at INTO Marshall University as my participants.

Figure 1: The Percentage of Chinese Studying at INTO Marshall in the spring, 2015

- ESL Students from China
- ESL Students from other countries
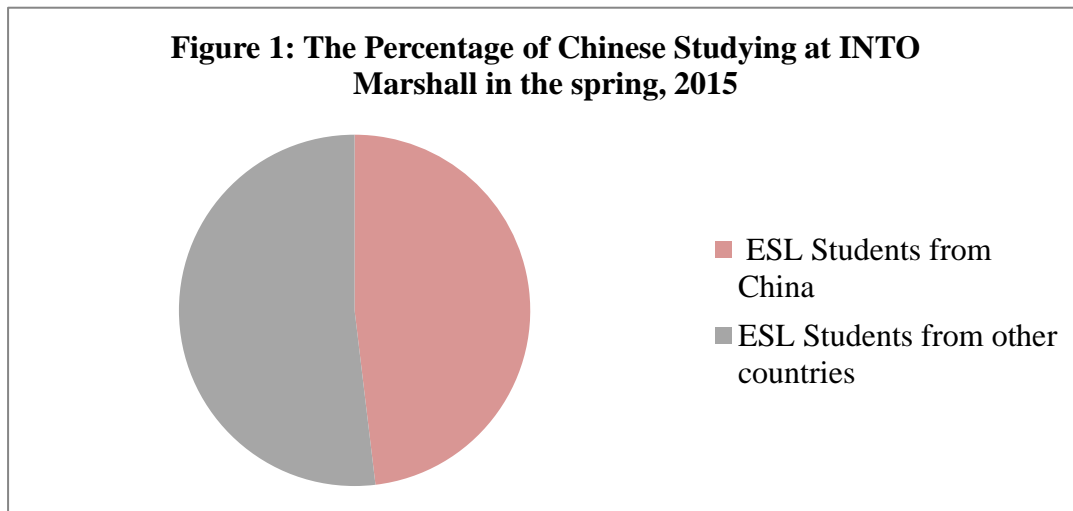
These international students who decide to study at INTO Marshall Center are required to pass a placement test. Based on their placement test scores and original standardized test scores, L2 students are assigned into the equivalent level to improve their English proficiency as well as pursue the undergraduate/graduate degree. Seven English levels were set at INTO Marshall to assist L2 students in developing English proficiency: Level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and pathway. On the basis of this sequence, L2 students who study at last two levels－Level 6 and pathway imply high advanced ESL learners.

Four kinds of curriculum have been designed for L2 students at INTO Marshall: Speaking & Listing, Reading & Vocabulary, Writing & Grammar as well as optional courses related to American culture. These four types of classes integrate both receptive skills and productive skills within one class to increase ESL students' learning motivation and improve their communicating skills. Although almost all learning skills have been integrated in every class at INTO Marshall, I chose the Listening & Speaking class to conduct this research project because the focus of my study is L2 students' speaking anxiety in presentations.

In INTO Marshall's Listening & Speaking Class Levels 1-5, ESL students are taught

essential and necessary listening and speaking skills to improve their English proficiency as well as some presentation skills mentioned for their speaking fluency. On the other hand, the Listening & Speaking Class at Level 6 and pathway instruct more skills regarding academic presentations to emphasize both L2 students' language fluency and accuracy. In order to assess students' learning performance and measure the improvement of ESL students' speaking proficiency, oral presentations as an alternative assessment have been frequently adopted by teachers in the classroom. Additionally, INTO Marshall University organized students' speaking mid-term and final term examinations with the format of in-class presentations. That means L2 students learning at INTO Marshall are required to give at least two presentations every semester. Thus, in this research project, I collected reliable data from two presentations from the Listening & Speaking Class. Table 1 identifies the two presentation topics for each participant:

Table 1

Presentations for each participant

	No.1 Presentation	No. 2 Presentation
Student H	Favorite foods	Study plan (post presentation)
Student Y	Interests and Habits	Foods in the hometown
Student Z	Topics related to the graduate major	High technologies

Participants

I contacted the coordinator of INTO Marshall to describe my research purposes and needs, after which she introduced essential information regarding INTO Marshall and gave me detailed information about INTO Marshall University. After the meeting, she introduced

me and my project to the other teachers. Most teachers were pleased to help me and suggested that I contact Chinese ESL students who might be willing to participate in this project individually.

Five Chinese ESL students were willing to be my participants in this research. However, I chose three of them for my research due to the fact that performance data would not be available for the other two students. I collected data from the three Chinese ESL students in the Listening & Speaking Class. All three participants were 22 years old.

Student H majors in MBA as well as improves his English proficiency at Level 4. Although student H has studied English at Level 4 and has been in the USA only about six months, he has experience presenting in front of classmates while in high school in China. Additionally, Student Y studies at Level 3 to prepare pursuing her Labor and Industrial Relations major at Marshall University. Although the time she has stayed in the USA is the same as that of Student H, she did not have any presentation experiences before she came to the U.S.A. Student Z, who has the same MBA major as Student H, has a higher English proficiency than other two students because he studies at the Pathway Level. Student Z has been in the U.S.A. longer than Students H and Z. Although a year is enough to enrich Student Z's in-class presentation experiences, he still has countable prior presentation experiences because he presented three times when he studied at the university in China. These participants' information backgrounds are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2

Participants' background information

	Participants' Major	English Proficiency	Prior Presentation Experiences	The Time Length in the USA
Student H	MBA	Level 4	Since high school	6 months
Student Y	Labor and Industrial Relations	Level 3	Presented twice in China while frequently presented at INTO	6 months
Student Z	MBA	Pathway	NO prior experiences	1 year

Role of Researcher

The factor that attracts me to focus on this topic is the multiple in-class presentation

opportunities I have experienced in the U.S.A. Oral presentations are frequently adopted into

ESL speaking class to improve L2 students' communicating skills (King, 2002). To give an

oral presentation in Listening & Speaking at an INTO class is a daily routine for me and my

classmates while most of my classmates have suffered, although some of them have prior

presentation experiences. Because of their complaints and confusion, I was curious about

ESL students' perceptions on in-class presentations. My initial impression was that students'

English proficiencies, cultural background, gender and their social identities all could be

possible factors affecting ESL students' perceptions of in-class presentations. However, ESL

students whom I contacted mentioned that giving presentations in speaking classes improved

their speaking skills but that they did not enjoy this class activity. It is a time-consuming and

face-threating activity for some ESL students, especially Asian ESL learners (King, 2002).

Thus, in addition to focusing on students' feelings during presentations, I considered reasons

why those students had lower levels of motivation for oral presentation activities.

Most ESL students get nervous when they give presentations in the classroom, and I

am one of them. In order to regulate this tense feeling, I searched relevant resources

grounding the definitions, coping strategies. They reminded me that this subjective feeling of

tension only occurs when we speak in English and it intensifies under different speaking

contexts (MacIntyre, 1999). This language anxiety is called speaking anxiety. Therefore, I

was curious about the reasons that ESL students get anxious about in-class presentations and

why their speaking anxiety is intensified in this context.

Based on the resources I found, most previous researchers investigated the sources,

nature and effects of speaking anxiety although fewer researchers explored possible factors

causing L2 speaking anxiety. The studies related to factors causing L2 speaking anxiety did

not focus on specific speaking activities within the classroom. Furthermore, the coping

strategies for ESL students to reduce language anxiety mentioned in the previous studies are

quite general. Thus, to fill this gap, I decided to conduct my research at INTO Marshall

University to explore connections between ESL students' presentation performance and the

speaking anxiety scale, possible factors causing speaking anxiety during presentations, and

coping strategies students adopted during presentations to reduce speaking anxiety. My

campus life at INTO Marshall, personal interests on speaking anxiety associated with the

needs of discipline inspired me to conduct this research project.

Data

Data for this research project were collected from triangulated sources: pre-task questionnaire, post-task interview, observation, teacher evaluations and peer evaluations. I designed my pre-task questionnaire as a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire to investigate possible factors causing speaking anxiety during presentations, participants' perceptions of presentations as well as speaking anxiety scale in in-class presentations based on FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986). The following sections will elaborate the collection procedures and the nature of four types of data I collected: pre-task questionnaire, post-task interview, observation, and comment data. Furthermore, I will also explain ways to use the data to answer the research questions in this study.

Pre-Task Questionnaire. Horwitz et al. (1986) designed validated FLCAS with thirty-three items and a five-point Likert Scale. Based on this questionnaire, Horwitz et al. identified language anxiety and classified it into three general categories grounding the source of language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and text anxiety. These sources are valid for all language anxieties, although the speaking anxiety as a kind of specific language anxiety only occurs under speaking contexts. However, the questionnaire of the present research project needs to be designed under an in-class presentation context. I adopted more than thirty-five items from Horwitz et al. to design a five-point Likert Scale pilot study. Due to the fact that the some of the items were redundant, twenty-three items were adopted for my current study.

These twenty-three items were measured on a five-point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree in the current questionnaire. It was filled out by

the three Chinese ESL students at INTO Marshall before they gave in-class presentations.

The construction and purpose of this questionnaire (Appendix 1) are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

The purpose and construction of pre-task questionnaire

Items	The Purpose of Items
1	Possible factor: the attention from audience
2	Perception on in-class presentations
3	Perception on in-class presentations
4	Possible factor : the number of presentations
5	Perception on in-class presentations
6	Possible factor: preparation time
7	Possible factor: preparation time
8	Possible factor: the order of presenter
9	Possible factor: teachers' grading
10	Possible factor: teachers' feedback during presentations
11	Possible factor: mistakes making
12	Perception on in-class presentation
13	Perception on in-class presentation
14	Perception on in-class presentation
15	Perception on in-class presentation
16	Possible factor: the attention from audience

17	Perception on in-class presentation
18	Possible factor: the attention from audience
19	Possible factor: the attention from audience
20	Perception on in-class presentation
21	Possible factor: teachers' feedback after presentation
22	Possible factor: question section after presentation
23	Possible factor: teachers' feedback after presentation

Based on the pre-questionnaire data I collected from the participants, the average

scores for each item to assess students' perception of in-class presentation activity and their

speaking anxiety level regarding possible factors were calculated, while the average score of

the whole questionnaire was computed to place participants into the appropriate L2 in-class

speaking anxiety scale.

Post-Task Interview. The post-task interview was conducted as the semi-structured

in-person interview to focus on the collection of students' demographics, perceptions of

in-class presentations, and "effective" coping strategies the students frequently adopted in the

presentations. Although the three participants speak fluent English daily, they may not

express their intentions or ideas accurately in English under the recorded interview context.

In order to avoid the participants becoming anxious in my interview, I focused on interactions

which created a friendly and comfortable interview atmosphere to produce reliable

information. Thus, I chose Chinese to conduct the interviews (Appendix 2) for reducing

participants' language anxiety.

I met Students H, Y, Z at the resting area of INTO Marshall separately in early March,

2015. Before this interview, participants had presented at least twice in front of classmates. I recorded the three interviews using a video recorder, and then translated them on the basis of the transcriptions of the interviews. The length of each interview was approximately 10 minutes. The following questions were asked to collect data for future analysis:

1. Do you think your personality is introvert or extrovert?

2. Can you please share with me your English learning experience? How do you think of your English proficiency?

3. What is your previous experience about in-class presentations? Did you feel tense or not?

4. Do you like in-class presentations or similar oral activities? And why?

5. Do you feel tense or nervous when you give in-class presentation in English? Why?

6. In your opinion, what are the causes of your nervousness or anxiety in the presentation?

7. Are there any ways for you to cope with your nervousness or anxiety in the presentations? If yes, please provide some details.

(If the student seems not clear about the last question, I would ask "what procedures may help you feel relieved?)

Answering these interview questions, participants were asked to rank their in-class speaking anxiety on a scale from 1 to 5, with "1" being the highest level of speaking anxiety and "5" being the lowest.

Observation. Observation was adopted to measure the participants' in-class presentation performance in order to explore connections with their in-class speaking anxiety and to find coping strategies for speaking anxiety used by ESL participants during presentations. I received support from the participants' Listening & Speaking teachers and

they allowed me to observe their classes, enabling me to follow recommended practices of qualitative research to record information as it occurs (Creswell, 1999). Mimicking the role of a classmate enabled me to collect reliable data regarding the participants' speaking anxiety, coping strategies, and presentation performance in the presentations.

When I observed the participants, I asked the teachers for their presentation rubrics to score each presentation. The grades of each participant's presentations obtained from the observations using the teachers' rubrics associated with observation notes has contributed to my assessment of each participant's in-class presentation performance.

Comment Data. In addition to students' received scores and comments from my observations, I gathered data involving students' presentation performance from their teachers and classmates. It is a routine for INTO Marshall ESL students to write short peer evaluations with scores for their classmates in pairs after each presentation. On the other hand, teachers usually score students' presentations with some narrative feedback. Thus, I gathered the original peer assessments from each participant's partners and a copy of the teacher's evaluations. These comment data were collected objectively. Topics related to the participants' presentations are listed above in Table 1.

Research Instruments and Corresponding Research Questions. This section expounds ways of using research instruments to seek answers to the current research questions. The conclusions of research instruments and corresponding research questions are demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Research instruments and corresponding research questions.

Research Questions		Instruments
1. What are the connections between students' L2 anxiety and their in-class oral presentation performance?	1). L2 students' speaking anxiety scales in presentations	(1). Pre-task questionnaire (based on FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986)) (2). Post-task interview
	2).Participants' in-class presentation performance	(1). Observation (including scores) (2). Teachers' evaluations (including scores and rubrics) (3). Peer evaluations (including scores) (4). Post-task interview
2. What factors may cause students' language anxiety in oral presentations?		(1). Pre-task questionnaire (2). Post-task interview
3. What strategies, if any, do students use to regulate their language anxiety in oral presentations?		(1). Post-task interview (2). Observation

The first research question investigates the connections between participants' L2 self-placement on the speaking anxiety scale and their in-class presentation performance. In order to measure the three ESL students' presentation performances, I used the observation

associated with presentation grades that I scored in classes, teacher evaluations including scores and rubrics, peer evaluations with scores, and the post- task interview. On the other hand, the pre-task questionnaire drawing on FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) was added to the post-task interview to elicit students' L2 oral anxiety scales in in-class presentations. The anxiety levels of each participant's oral performances were also explored through comment data and observation notes. Then, the participants' overall in-class presentation performance was correlated with their L2 in-class speech anxiety scale.

The pre-task questionnaire and post-task interview were conducted to seek answers to the second research question: possible factors causing students' speaking anxiety in oral presentations. The last research question investigates students' coping strategies for speaking anxiety during presentations through the post-task interview and observation notes.

Data Analysis

This section will elaborate the techniques of analyzing each data source. I used descriptive analysis in this qualitative case study to examine collected data and find answers for each research question. For instance, pre-task questionnaire data were calculated as average scores to measure students' speaking anxiety scales while comment data including students' presentation scores were analyzed to assess students' presentation performance. In addition, the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was adopted to derive connections between L2 speaking anxiety scales and presentation performances. I divided my data into "units" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and then analyzed them into developed categories. By constantly comparing these "units," these categories regarding L2 students' in-class presentation anxiety were refined and "their relationships between the categories over the

course of analytical process were explored" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Analysis for Pre-Task Questionnaire. In order to measure the three L2 participants' language anxiety scales, possible factors causing their in-class speaking anxiety and the coping strategies that they used in presentations, I designed twenty-three 5-point Likert scale questionnaire items based on FLCAS (Horwitz ,1986). After collecting data from the participants, their answers were inputted to each Likert scale questionnaire item in the excel spreadsheets to calculate the average scores. The participants' in-class presentation anxiety scores were calculate based on their questionnaire responses. I compared the students' choices of each Likert scale questionnaire item relating in-class presentation perceptions, attitudes towards in-class speaking activities and prior in-class English speaking experiences, which assisted me to reveal possible factors causing L2 in-class speaking anxiety as well as coping strategies that L2 students frequently use in presentations to reduce speaking anxiety.

Analysis for Post-Task Interview. I conducted the content analysis of the face-to-face post-task interviews mainly in Chinese with all my participants. Using the participants' first language to conduct the interviews created a low-anxiety interview atmosphere and prompted them to more openly express their true feelings. Participants' interview answers were translated and recorded in Word Documents. The translations of participants' interview responses were focused on their linguistic features for matching Chinese ESL students' social stances, cultural backgrounds and relationships between the speaker and listeners. Transcripts of these interviews were read and compared multiple times to identify recurring features. These features were compared to identify the salient themes and generate thematic categories.

Analysis for Comment Data. Comment data were collected from teacher evaluations, peer evaluations and the observer's evaluations. Both teachers and students gave comments and feedback for presenters with scores. These scores were determined on the basis of the teachers' rubrics. Teacher evaluations were already documented as Word files by teachers and handed out to every student in the classroom, while peer evaluations were written by students as their homework. After students submitted their evaluations to teachers, I gathered data from the teachers and transcribed them into a Word Document.

On the other hand, I also wrote comments and graded presentations for the three participants based on the teachers' class requirements and presentation rubrics. This observer's comment data were also examined with teacher and peer evaluations together by using the content-based analysis approach. Data were managed and integrated into three cases for the participants. Every participant's case was read multiple times to find the important points and compare these points with other participants. The most salient points were highlighted in each participant's case, because they are helpful in data presentation and interpretation.

Analysis for Observation. I observed the three participants from the perspective of a classmate. As a familiar observer for the three participants, I could collect reliable data during their in-class presentations. I first made notes regarding the participants' anxious reactions, presentation topics, presentation content and the observable coping strategies that the ESL students adopted to alleviate their speaking anxiety. Then, I scored the participants' presentations following the teachers' rubrics and class requirements. These observation notes were collected and organized into Word Documents. I classified and examined these data for

each participant by using content-based analysis. The observation data were read carefully

and key information was highlighted to identify possible factors that caused in-class speaking

anxiety and coping strategies utilized by the participants during presentations.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The third chapter elaborates the procedures of data collection and analysis by using four types of research instruments: the pre-task questionnaire; post-task interview; observation including rubrics; and comment data from teachers, classmates as well as the researcher. Based on the data analyzed in Chapter 3, results correlated to the three research questions will be discussed in this chapter.

Findings

Findings of the First Research Question. Collected data were classified and analyzed to investigate findings of the participants' in-class presentation anxiety and their presentation performances, respectively. Afterwards, the findings from the data analysis were summarized and integrated to explore the connections between the L2 students' speaking anxiety and in-class presentation performance.

Participants' in-class speech anxiety scale. The first research question was examined through the pre-task questionnaire, post-task interview, observation, and teacher/peer evaluations. Based on the questionnaire data, Table 5 shows the average scores for each item and the three participants. The average scores represent the participants' in-class presentation anxiety scales while a lower score means a higher level of speaking anxiety.

Table 5

Participants' speaking anxiety scales (based on questionnaire data)

The Number of Item	Student H	Student Y	Student Z	Average Score of

				Each Item
No.1	4	3	2	3
No. 2	4	2	2	2.67
No.3	3	3	1	2.34
No.4	5	2	2	3
No.5	5	2	2	3
No.6	4	2	3	2.67
No.7	5	1	1	2.67
No.8	5	2	2	3
No.9	4	3	2	3
No.10	5	2	2	3
No.11	3	2	3	2.67
No.12	3	1	3	2.34
No.13	4	2	4	3.33
No.14	3	3	1	2.34
No.15	3	3	4	3.33
No.16	2	3	4	3
No.17	3	2	4	3
No.18	4	3	3	3.33
No.19	3	2	2	2.34
No.20	4	1	3	2.67

No.21	4	1	1	2
No.22	4	1	3	2.67
No.23	4	2	2	2.67
Average Score for Every Participant	3.83	2.87	2.43	

As Table 5 demonstrates, Student Y has the highest level of anxiety because of the lowest score among the three participants. In order to obtain an accurate score, I added anxiety scales which were selected by the participants in their interviews to calculate the final scores representing the participants' speaking in-class presentation scales (see Table 6).

Table 6

Students' in-class speaking anxiety scale (based on interview and questionnaire)

	Student H	Student Y	Student Z
Anxiety Scale (questionnaire)	3.83	2.87	2.43
Anxiety Scale (interview)	3	2	3
Total Average scale	3.445	2.435	2.715

The reasons that the participants chose relevant speaking anxiety scales in their interviews were given in the interview data:

Student H: *"It is okay for me to give in-class presentations in English, I just need enough time for my preparations my English is not good."*
Student Y: "Super nervous! I don't like that! I don't want to be a focus in front of people."
Student Z: "…little nervous because English is not my mother tongue.. But…it's fine. Presentations are better than papers, and I'm getting used to deliver English speeches

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in front of my classmates now. So, I don't think I'm nervous as before".

These students' perceptions of in-class presentations offered reasons why they chose their own representative anxiety scales. Student Y thought that presentations are an extremely tense oral activity because she is afraid to be the focus of the class. Although Students H and Z mentioned that in-class presentations are not extremely stressful speaking activities for them, they still get anxious about oral presentations because they do not have higher English proficiency. Specially, Student H, who has higher English proficiency than others, said the reason he got anxious during presentations is that English is his second language. Therefore, Students H and Z chose Scale 3 (an intermediate level) to describe their in-class speaking anxiety in the interview.

The total average score for each student based on both the questionnaire and interview data (Table 6) demonstrates that Student H has a lower level of speaking anxiety. Compared with Student H, Student Y shows the highest oral anxiety, and Student Z remains at an intermediate level of speaking anxiety. These results of language anxiety scales were combined with the participants' presentation performance in the classroom, which will be analyzed below.

Participants' presentation performances. Students' presentation performances were measured by their teachers, classmates, and the observer (Table 7) based on the rubrics associated with the comment data to elaborate their speaking anxiety levels from the audience's perspectives.

Table 7

Students' presentation performance

	Student H		Student Y		Student Z	
Number of Presentations	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**
Observation	90%	75%	90%	90%	82.5%	87.5%
Teacher Evaluation	93.75%	70.83%	88.75%	83.3%	80%	85%
Peer Evaluation	90%	82.5%	95%	90%	87.5%	90%
Average	91.25%	<u>76.11%</u>	<u>91.25%</u>	87.77%	83.3%	87.5%

According to Table 7, Student Z received a medium score in his two presentations, and Students H and Y both received one lower score and one higher score in their presentations.

Connections (speaking anxiety & presentation performance). It is worth noticing that Student H received a lower score in his second presentation while Student Y gained a higher score in her first in-class presentation. However, the data regarding L2 students' speaking anxiety scales indicate that Student H has a lower level of speaking anxiety while Student Y has a higher level of anxiety. It turns out that these presentation performance data may not have much connection with the ESL students' speaking anxiety because the participants could still obtain a high presentation score when they experience in-class speech anxiety. For the same reason, the participant with a lower level of speaking anxiety might get a low presentation grade. Performances regarding Student H's second presentation and Student Y's first presentation have been analyzed in detail based on the comment data (Table 8) to explore their connections with speaking anxiety.

Table 8

Comment data for Student H and Y's presentation performance

Student H	
Teacher Evaluations	*"Posture and eye contact was good, you seemed very relaxed and self-confident during your presentation. However, the tittle and name affiliation of your poster are hard to read. The graphics present lacking explanations."*
Peer Evaluations	*"You maintain the eye contact with little gesture; I could understand your presentation."*
Observation	Speech is clear, looks confidence, some pauses and fillers, the poster is not clear.
Lower level of speaking anxiety scale , but the score is **NOT High**	
Student Y	
Teacher Evaluations	*"1.You seemed generally positive about your topic. You were very fluent and did not use many pauses or fillers.* *2. Your eye contact was okay at times, but you spend more time than should be necessary looking at your cards.* *3. Your posture and body language were very good. It might be better next time to try to move out from behind the podium a bit if possible."*
Peer Evaluations	*Your presentation is so funny and cute; you attract the attention of audience. However, you need to speak slower so that we can understand what you are talking about. Calm down a little bit, do not be nervous".*

Observation	Dressing more formal than others, hiding behind the podium, spending more time to look at the cards and the computer.

Higher level of speaking anxiety scale, but the score is **high**

The comment data, related to Student H, evaluate his performance on the second presentation as a lower score performance. The reasons for this lower score were not attributed to in-class speaking anxiety, but to the content of Student H's second presentation. Because of his disorganized poster, Student H's second presentation grade is not high. Although Student H was regarded as having a lower speaking anxiety level, his speaking teacher commented that he was a confident presenter with enough eye contact. My observation notes for Student H are similar to the teacher's comments, while the partner's comments focused more on his confidence. In contrast, Student Y was perceived as a nervous presenter during presentations because of her higher in-class speaking anxiety level, and the comment data which identified her as being anxious. However, she still received a higher score in her first presentation because her content attracted the audience's attention.

This means that both presentation contents and in-class presentation anxiety may affect presenters' performance. Although ESL learners get anxious about presentations, the degree of anxiety tends to have little effect on their presentation performance.

Findings of the Second Research Question. Possible factors causing the ESL learners' speaking anxiety in presentations were classified as subjective and objective factors on the basis of the pre-task questionnaire and post-task interview in this section. Six possible factors have been found as contributing to the causes of anxiety in ESL students regarding oral presentations.

The subjective factors. Although all the participants perceived their English

proficiency as being at the intermediate level, their ESL language ability is mentioned

frequently in the post-task interviews:

> *Student H*: *"......I feel nervous because my English is not good. I always tend to correct my pronunciation during the presentation, but the more I correct, the more anxious I get. "*
> *Student Y*: *"I even feel more nervous when I give the presentation in Chinese! So...It's same in English."*
> *Student Z*: *"......little nervous because English is not my mother tongue. Sometimes, I need more time to translate Chinese into English."*

All the participants believed that giving presentations in English causes their tense

feeling. Even Student Z who has the highest English proficiency level among the three

participants was not confident about his English during presentations because English is not

his mother tongue. Therefore, it suggests that concerns about English proficiency causes

anxious feelings not only for lower level students, but also for advanced level students.

To give a presentation in English would be a cognitively demanding activity for ESL

students whose L2 proficiency is not high. They need to consider presentation ideas or recall

presentation contents while translating these ideas and contents from L1 to L2. In contrast,

for ESL students who reach almost (near-) native-like speaking proficiency delivering a

speech in English is nearly automatic behavior. They do not need to spend more time on the

translation of the presentation ideas or contents. English proficiency for the three participants

is still far from a native-like level as they pay too much attention on the processing and

translating of presentation ideas. Therefore, ESL students perceive English proficiency as a

factor that causes in-class speaking anxiety.

Next, the time required for participants to prepare oral presentations affects their

speaking anxiety. The data from the questionnaire investigated factors which cause speaking

anxiety. The sixth and seventh items of this questionnaire explored the preparation time as a possible factor (Table 3) while the average score has been calculated in both items as 2.6 separately (Table 5). Due to the fact that a lower average score means a higher level of anxiety, all the participants regarded their preparation time as an anxiety-inducing factor in their presentations. Especially, Student Z, who had a higher English proficiency level, and Student Y with a lower English proficiency level, both chose "1" to represent their higher speaking anxiety regarding their preparation time (Table 5) in Item 7. It reveals preparation time as a possible factor that causes speaking anxiety for students with both lower and higher English proficiency. The lower English proficiency Student Y may have more intense reflections regarding presentation preparation time in the interview. She mentioned that she felt her heart pounding when her assignments do not give her enough preparation time.

> *Student Y*: *"……If the teacher does not give me enough time to prepare or ask me to deliver an impromptu presentation; I would feel my heart pounding."*

Additionally, Student H who has lower level of speaking anxiety also mentioned in his interview:

> *Student H*: *"……If I spend more than 3 hours on my preparation, I would not feel tense in my presentation."*

The interview data suggest that students with lower speaking anxiety may also feel concerned about presentation preparation time. To summarize these findings related to the presentation preparation time, all the participants experienced speaking anxiety in the classroom without enough presentation time. Longer preparation time would allow students to feel more relaxed before in-class presentations.

Then, participants' presentation experiences also become a possible factor that causes in-class speaking anxiety. As mentioned in Table 2, Student Y is a novice presenter in

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comparison to Students H and Z. The other two participants, Z and H, both have some experience in giving presentations in their first language, but they have given more presentations at INTO Marshall. Student H is the most experienced presenter among the three participants. When the researcher as an interviewer asked questions regarding the participants' in-class presentation experiences, the more experienced presenters stated that the more they present in class, the less they feel nervous. For instance, Student H said that he was not so nervous as before because he frequently had to give presentations.

> *Student H: "I gave the similar English presentations in my bachelor degree when I was in China, but it was my nightmare ...my oral English was really weak. I took more than a week to practice my pronunciations and remember the draft.   But now, I'm getting used to the life with presentations, because I need to deliver presentations almost twice a month. I'm not nervous as before. "*
> *Student Y: "My Bachelor degree did not require us to give presentation, so, I never gave presentations before, even in Chinese...I still feel embarrassed and upset when I think about my first time to give the presentation in INTO now."*

In contrast, Student Y, who did have much experience in presentations before, is still in the process of adapting to classes in the U.S. which frequently require oral presentations. She said that she still feels upset when she recalls her first presentation. It shows that novice presenters may experience more anxieties in their initial presentations, even causing some unpleasant experiences. Therefore, it can be concluded that experienced presenters experience less nervousness than novice presenters.

The objective factors. Topics chosen by teachers may cause ESL students to get anxious during presentations; even unfamiliar topics could affect students' presentation performances. All the participants indicated their anxious feelings about unfamiliar presentation topics:

> *Student Z*: "……it worries me when I get the topics are professional and abstract."
> *Student H*: "……it depends on topics. I'm not good at drawing, so I don't know how

to design or present a poster in-detail. That is the reason why I lost so many scores in my second presentation."
Student Y: "……I would like to give presentations, if I got my favorite topics. Just as last time I gave the presentation about my hobby and I got a good score."

The interview feedback strongly suggests that participants are keen on their

presentation topics when those topics are consistent with their interests, such as favorite foods

or habits (Table 1). In contrast, abstract presentation topics or formats lead participants to lose

interest in in-class presentations. For example, Student H, who got a lower score in his

second presentation, explained that the topic of his second presentation was to elaborate a

study plan in the format of a poster. However, he did not have prior presentation experience

with posters, and this topic was also unfamiliar to him. Thus, he was weak in his poster

design as well as his explanations of the poster.

Audience attention is a bigger factor for novice presenters than for experienced

presenters with regard to causing anxiety. Although the data gleaned from Items 16 and 18 in

the questionnaire (Tables 3 and 5) regarding audience attention were calculated as

intermediate (average score: 3) and higher intermediate (average score: 3.3) scores, the

results do not suggest that all the participants experience the same medium level of speaking

anxiety in the class. The interview data support this finding: Student H stated that he may

repeat words but not perform too nervously in front of an audience, while Student Y, who

chose the item of getting anxious in front of an audience, explained that she was afraid to

look at the audience. Student Z chose a neutral score in the questionnaire, and only

mentioned that he got anxious with the teachers' attention.

Student H: "….I had a good preparation and I think can handle all the problems. So, nothing is afraid." (2: strong disagree)
Student Z: "……if my teacher looks at me, I would feel uncomfortable so that I usually look at other places…." (3: neutral)

Student Y: "……I only look at my friends when I giving presentation. Others make me nervous…." (4: strong agree)

Although audience attention causes more speaking anxiety for novice presenters, they are not so anxious about criticism from the audience. The other experienced presenters were not so worried about being laughed at by the audience. Thus, although audience attention may cause less anxiety for experienced presenters and more for novice presenters, participants might not be afraid of laughter from the audience.

Some peripheral presentation requirements such as time, notes, and impromptu speech may also lead ESL students to get anxious, but they are marginal factors. Some ESL students may feel tense about one of the above requirements, while others may not get anxious about it. For instance, based on the interview data, Student Z who remains at the intermediate level of anxiety indicated that notes are important for him when he gives a presentation, while Student H is nervous about time limits for presentations. As for Student Y, she is afraid to give an impromptu presentation.

Student H: "…...I usually give presentations without notes….I want to say more in my favorite presentation, but I start to panic after the teacher reminds me that I'm running out of time….."
Student Y: "…...If the teacher does not give me enough time to prepare or ask me to deliver an impromptu presentation, I would feel my heart pounding…..we all know the presentation will be scored. So, that is okay for me….."
Student Z: "….…if I cannot read my notes, I would feel nervous…."

This interview data indicate that although time, notes, and impromptu speeches as secondary factors account for smaller percentages in teachers' presentation rubrics, participants are still nervous about them. However, ESL students may get anxious about these different secondary presentation requirements.

Therefore, subjective factors (L2 students' English proficiency, preparation time, and prior presentation experiences) and objective factors (unfamiliar presentation topics, audience

attention, and secondary presentation requirements) were categorized as causing in-class

speaking anxiety in the presentation.

Findings of the Third Research Question. Based on the interviews and observation

data, I identified coping strategies adopted by the participants to reduce their in-class

speaking anxiety in presentations. The following data are responses from the interviews:

> *Interviewer: Are there any ways for you to cope with your nervousness or anxiety in the presentations? If yes, please provide some details.*
> *Student H: "....it is important to have enough preparation. Do not be distracted and just focus what you are going to say…. "*
> *Student Y: "The essential way is to improve my oral English……I only look at my friends when I giving presentation, others make me nervous…I may even cross my hands, but audience cannot see it, because I usually stand behind the podium…if I nervous I may make mistakes or forget what I am going to say, I would repeat that sentence or say "I'm sorry…"*
> *Student Z: "…The important thing is to develop the reaction capacity in the class, because we do not know what would happen in our presentation ……Then, I usually look at my note card when I nervous."*

During the interview, Student H claimed that to have enough preparations and focus

on his own presentations are his coping strategies to regulate in-class speech anxiety. The

observation showed that Student H also tended to adopt repetitions, fillers in his presentation

to reduce speaking anxiety.

Student Y, with higher in-class speech anxiety, tended to hide behind the podium and

use physical adjustments and fillers to camouflage or reduce her nervousness. Although she

admitted her frequent coping strategies for reducing speaking anxiety in presentations are

using fillers and physical adjustments, to improve oral English is her essential strategy to

improve her presentation performance.

Student Z, who has the highest English proficiency among the participants, mentioned

that developing a healthy "spirit of improvisation" in the class and using note cards helped

him to alleviate his speaking anxiety. However, the observation notes recorded that he spent more time on his note cards and used many pauses and fillers. Thus, it is clear that the coping strategies for Student Z are to improve random response capabilities, use physical adjustment, and adopt pauses and fillers.

These strategies used by the participants in their presentations to regulate in-class speaking anxiety can be categorized into short-term and long-term coping strategies. Short-term coping strategies are strategies that can be used during presentations to reduce current speaking anxiety such as to adopting physical adjustment, using repetitions, pauses, fillers and focusing on the presentations, while long-term strategies refer to long time preparations and improvements for English speaking proficiency to alleviate future in-class speaking anxiety, such as having a good preparation, developing a well spirit of improvisation for impromptu presentations or other presentation requirements.

Summary

According to the data in the Tables 6 and 7, it is possible for the participant who performs with lower speaking anxiety during presentations to get a lower score while the higher speaking anxiety scale participant may receive a higher score. Although Student H remained at the intermediate level on the anxiety scale, his second presentation score was a little higher than that of the first one. Thus, it can be concluded that L2 learners get anxious in presentations, but the degree of anxiety tends to have little effect on their presentation performance. Students' presentation performances may also be affected by other variables while in-class speaking anxiety could also be regulated by students' coping strategies. That is the reason why students can still gain good presentation scores in activities that induce severe

anxiety.

Factors causing speaking anxiety in ESL student presentations explored in this research are their English proficiency, assignment preparation time, and their prior presentation experiences, presentation topics, audience attention, and secondary presentation requirements. These factors are classified into subjective and objective factors causing L2 students' anxiety during presentations. However, secondary presentation requirements are peripheral factors because they are student-oriented. Some ESL students get anxious about a specific factor while others may not or feel less tense about it.

Based on these factors, ESL students have their own strategies to regulate their anxious behaviors. These strategies have been investigated and summarized through interviews and observation data. The collected data indicate that ESL participants tended to adopt short-term and long-term coping strategies in their presentations to reduce in-class speaking anxiety. For instance, the short-term coping strategies are to adopt physical adjustment, to use some repetitions, pauses, fillers and to focus on students' own presentations, while long-term strategies are to improve students' English proficiency, to have good preparation, and to develop good random response capabilities with impromptu presentations or other presentation requirements.

Findings can be clarified into five points below: L2 learners get anxious about presentations, but this in-class speaking anxiety does not have so much connection with their presentation performance. Complex subjective and objective factors, such as English proficiency and audience attention can cause anxiety in presentations and may even affect students' presentation performances. Additionally, some factors such as secondary

presentation requirements are peripheral factors that cause some L2 students to get anxious about oral presentations. Next, some coping strategies adopted by learners are not so effective in giving presentations. For instance, using too much physical adjustment, pauses and fillers not only leads students to get a lower presentation score, but also forms negative English speaking habits. What is more, in order to reduce L2 students' speaking anxiety and improve their English proficiency to avoid ineffective efforts, the findings suggest that it is essential to develop more long-term coping strategies.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to explore connections between ESL students' presentation performance and in-class speaking anxiety, factors causing speaking anxiety in presentations, and coping strategies adopted by ESL students to reduce oral anxiety during presentations. Chapter 4 presented findings of the current research. This chapter will further discuss these findings based on the collected data and their implications for the present research as well as future in-class presentation designs.

Discussion

Due to the fact that in-class speaking anxiety is a situation-specific form of language anxiety, it is stable over time, but not necessarily consistent across situations (MacIntyre, 1999). In other words, this specific form of anxiety in a single context can be regulated by coping strategies contributing to students' target language development. It implies that the regulated speaking anxiety may exist permanently, but it cannot always remain at the same level within different speaking activities. Thus, it may be difficult for teachers to determine whether L2 students have experienced in-class speaking anxiety because speaking anxieties differ from activity to activity. L2 students' performances of in-class speaking activities do not have much connection with their speaking anxiety level. The anxious feelings from ESL/EFL students could be reduced by effective coping strategies to gain higher-scored speaking performances. In contrast, most ineffective short-term coping strategies could also be used to alleviate in-class speaking anxiety. However, such strategies might lead L2 students to get lower scores. Therefore, in-class speech anxiety cannot be measured only by

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students' speaking activity performances alone.

Factors causing students to get anxious in presentations have been explained and categorized into subjective and objective factors: English proficiency, time for preparation, presenters' experiences, unfamiliar topics, audience attention and some secondary requirements in presentations. ESL students are primarily worried about their English speaking proficiency because English is their second language. The lower English proficiency learners may process their ideas in a way similar to what they do in their L1 and translate their thoughts into L2 at the same time. It is a cognitively demanding process for these lower English level students. Although higher English proficiency ESL students spend less time translating, they are also required to learn the skills and ways to deliver more academic speeches instead of simple everyday speaking skills.

The language of academia differs from everyday language. The most obvious characteristic of the language of schooling, to the non-initiated, is that it is decontextualized (Schleppegrell, 2004). Abstract and decontextualized academic English is a brand-new language for ESL as well as L2 learners, which has different linguistic choices from conversational interactions for higher level ESL students to approach and study at universities. For the same reason, this new language is also cognitively demanding for higher level ESL participants. They need to consider the context and language choices when they give a speech in academic areas in the classroom. That is also the reason why Student Z who has the highest English proficiency among the three ESL students still claimed that English is hard for him. Thus, English proficiency is an essential factor that causes ESL students' in-class presentation anxiety because lower level students spend more time on the translation of ideas

while higher level students may focus more on the choices of grammar structures or language use.

Lack of preparation time for students is a subjective factor causing in-class anxiety. It has been mentioned before that giving in-class presentations in English for L2 students is a cognitively demanding activity. Students need time to construct their ideas and make correct language choices, while preparing for presentations is a process by which L2 students practice their English speaking in order to master presentation skills and reduce language anxieties. More preparation and practice time is similar to the message redundancy: repeating main presentation contents gives students more opportunities to improve and master their presenting skills (Wong-Fillmore 1985). In contrast, if students spend less time preparing for their presentations with a lower level of random response capabilities, they may not give fluent presentations thereby causing speaking anxiety in the classroom.

ESL students who have more prior presentation experiences may feel less nervous than novice presenters. Their prior presentation experiences form their learning schemata bridging their prior and current knowledge. Thus, students who have presented before would not get anxious while less experienced presenters feel tense because they do not have enough prior presenting schemata to absorb and transform their current language into a desired form of using L2. L2 leaners face the additional challenge of regulating their speaking anxiety while adapting to the requirements of a new speaking activity.

Unfamiliar presentation topics belong to objective factors causing L2 students' speaking anxiety. An L2 learner will have a more difficult time earning a high score on a presentation if she is not already familiar with and interested in the topic. Although it is

effective to bridge students' current knowledge and essential language skills by assigning

unfamiliar presentation topics, L2 teachers should use the strategy appropriately to avoid

causing student anxiety.

Due to the fact that ESL students spend their time on the processing of presentation

ideas and target language translations, they are not available to focus on other things.

Audience attention might be a distracting factor. L2 students have to recall their presentation

contents, translate their ideas, and consider their audience's expectations at the same time.

The more they care about their audiences, the more nervous they feel in the speaking activity.

However, this distraction also can be reduced with students' speaking anxiety scales. ESL

students who have more prior presentation experiences are getting used to be a focus in front

of classmates and teachers, so they are more familiar with the major requirements from

teachers and expectations from audience. That is why experienced presenters are not so

nervous with the attentions from audiences.

Secondary requirements for presentations are peripheral factors causing students'

in-class speaking anxiety. These requirements may lead some students to experience extreme

nervous feelings, while others might feel less anxious. Although these requirements are

peripheral factors, the anxious feelings caused by them still form obstacles in L2 learners'

second language development. Therefore, the effects from secondary requirements cannot be

overlooked.

Participants seem to have their own ways to regulate their anxious feelings. These

strategies are summarized as short-term and long-term coping strategies adopted into their

in-class presentations to reduce their speaking anxiety. Although some short-term strategies

can reduce students' nervous feelings by shifting these feelings through physical adjustment or language fillers, L2 students would appear more nervous from the audience's perspective after using such short-term strategies. Audience and presentation raters can regard students using these short-term anxiety coping strategies during speeches as anxious presenters. Thus, scores for this kind of presenters are not high because of students' nervous performances. Compared with short-term coping strategies, long coping strategies may not alleviate in-class speaking anxiety directly during presentation. Students' English proficiency and ability for "emergency" management in the classroom are developed to further reduce oral anxiety. Although long-term coping strategies are time-consuming, they aim to improve ESL students learning abilities without forming negative speaking habits in the process of acquiring a second language. However, ESL students usually adopt convenient short-term strategies instead of time-consuming long-term strategies. Thus, in the process of second language acquisition, these ESL students might foster negative speaking habits, such as using language fillers and repetitions. To prevent the formation of these redundant negative speaking habits, it is necessary for L2 teachers to help students identify effective coping strategies or give L2 students hints to discover their own effective coping strategies. Based on teachers' instructions and suggestions, ESL students' in-class speaking anxieties are reduced effectively as well as fluent speeches are delivered without redundant negative speaking habits.

Conclusions

Findings reveal that all participants get anxious during in-class oral presentations. However, in-class speaking anxiety does not have much connection with ESL students'

presentation performances. ESL students' presentation performances are also affected by speaking anxiety coping strategies used in presentations. By adopting effective coping strategies, higher anxiety level students effectively alleviate their nervous feelings to gain a high score in presentations as well as developing effective language learning habits. On the contrary, adopting ineffective coping strategies may reduce L2 students' speaking anxiety, but students may earn a low score during presentations. Although coping strategies can reduce students' speaking anxiety, it is also necessary for L2 teachers to create a low-anxiety atmosphere in speaking classes, especially for in-class presentations.

Although the findings remind L2 teachers that ESL students' presentation performances would be affected by their speaking anxiety, these students' L2 anxiety scales cannot be decided directly through their in-class presentation performances. In order to figure out whether L2 students have experienced in speaking anxiety and develop effective strategies to reduce students' in-class speaking anxiety, teachers need to go beyond simply judging students' presentation performance. By observing L2 students' in-class presentation performance and their speaking performances out of class, teachers can determine their ESL students' oral anxiety scales. If L2 students have had unpleasant presentation experiences or felt extremely nervous during in-class presentations, the first strategy for teachers is to encourage students. In-class presentations are not the only way to improve ESL students' oral proficiency, so students should not be discouraged by their unpleasant presentation experiences. After L2 students feel more comfortable to present in the classroom through teachers' encouragement, teachers need to assist students to find their weaknesses or identify ineffective speaking anxiety coping strategies. Thus, negative speaking habits could be

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avoided and good presentation performances can be achieved by using effective speaking anxiety coping strategies.

According to the present findings, students see the following as effective coping strategies: to focus on the presentations, to improve oral English proficiency, to have a good preparation, and to develop good random response capabilities with impromptu presentations. In order to assist students to master these coping strategies to reduce speaking anxiety, identify effective coping strategies from speaking anxiety strategies they used before as well as develop more effective speaking anxiety coping strategies, some effective methods and strategies will be elaborated from L2 teachers' perspectives to diminish factors causing students' oral anxiety.

Based on factors causing students' in-class speaking anxiety, ESL students' English proficiency is the first factor mentioned in the interview data. For both higher and lower English proficiency L2 students, in-class presentation is a cognitively demanding activity for them. Lower English level of students need to improve their simple everyday conversations with basic academic grammar, while higher level of ESL students should focus more on the using of academic language. Although this language learning processes is a challenge for all ESL students, lower level of ESL students suffer more from obstacles in presentation activities. Due to the fact that students with lower English proficiency cannot memorize too many complex clauses or sentences as well as academic technical terms, these cognitively demanding structures need to be avoided in low-anxiety presentations. Thus, for the lower level of L2 students, teachers may encourage them to use more simple words and structures to present. It is easy for these students to recall their presentation ideas. On the other hand, for

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higher level of ESL students concerned about technical terms and language use in their academic presentations, note cards and outlines should be encouraged. With the encouragement of outline writing and note card use, L2 students are able to organize a coherent academic speech.

Although previous researchers proved the video recording is a factor causing students to get anxious in speaking classes (King, 2002), it can be used out of the classrooms or at home for L2 students' presentation rehearsals. A good rehearsal means enough preparations, which can help students overcome problems for lacking of the preparation time. By rehearsing in front of the video recorder, L2 students may become familiar with their presentation contents as well as more aware of their own speaking habits in front of audiences. Getting used to presenting in front of mechanical recorders is beneficial for L2 novice presenters increasing and negative speaking habits correcting. After ESL students deliver a good speech with recordings from the mechanical "audience," they are able to achieve a high score presentation performance in front of real classroom audiences.

Peer assessment is an effective teaching method to assist students in achieving a good presentation performance (Otoshi & Hefferman, 2008) except for overlooking ESL students' speaking anxieties. Attention from classmates and teachers may cause L2 students to get anxious during presentations. However, if the peer assessment can be used before and out of class presentations, L2 students could achieve better presentation performances and enjoy this oral activity. Allowing ESL students to have peer assessments before class presentations could provide opportunities for knowing their classmates' topics and learning from them. Even L2 students can be inspired by some encouragement or suggestions from their peer

assessment so that they would not feel anxious during presentation.

Unfamiliar topics not only cause students' anxious feeling in presentations, but also lead L2 students to get a lower score. In order to reduce students' tense feelings about unfamiliar presentation topics, teachers may need to choose more flexible presentation topics associated with L2 students' majors, interests and essential presentation skills. L2 students would feel more relax and comfortable delivering a speech in the classrooms and desire to present more ideas related to these topics. Although this way choosing topics is also a challenge for teachers, it is an effective strategy to avoid L2 student get more anxious about unfamiliar presentation topics.

Although less previous research focused on speaking in-class anxiety in presentation activity, the current research project fills this gap by investing connections between ESL students speaking anxiety and presentation performances, factors causing in-class presentation anxiety and coping strategies adopted by students in presentations. According to the findings based on these three research questions, relevant suggestions have been offered above to reduce students' speaking anxiety caused by investigating factors from teachers' perspectives and to develop effective anxiety coping strategies.

This study is limited to the interview data collection. The post-task interview took place in the students' native language and was then translated into English. The main reason to do this was so that the students might have less difficulty expressing their real feelings and thoughts. It would be ideal to collect larger data samples for further research. I was able to recruit only three participants for the current research project because of the time limitation and some interpersonal reasons from the teachers. These collected data cannot present a full

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picture of ESL students' in-class speaking anxiety in presentations.

The focus of this research is on ESL students' in-class speaking anxiety. For future research, other factors causing speaking anxiety might be explored, such as gender, technologies, and teachers' feedback. Additionally, coping strategies for other specific types of anxieties, such as speaking anxiety with native speakers or writing anxiety under standardized test contexts might further be examined.

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MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
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Office of Research Integrity   FWA 00002704
Institutional Review Board
401 11th St., Suite 1300   IRB1 #00002205
Huntington, WV 25701   IRB2 #00003206

December 18, 2014

Mimi Li, Ph.D.
English Department

RE: IRBNet ID# 682055-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Li:

Protocol Title: [682055-1] ESL Students Language Anxiety in In-class Oral Presentations

Expiration Date: December 18, 2015
Site Location: MU
Submission Type: New Project   APPROVED
Review Type: Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(1)&(2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire December 18, 2015. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Yusi Chen.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

STUDY 1 LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you very much for participating in this study. The following is a questionnaire concerning your anxiety in the language class, particularly in the in-class presentation. I designed this questionnaire based on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Please read each statement carefully and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by **circling your choice** on the five-point scale. The results of this survey will be used only for the research purpose. Therefore, please honestly provide your answers. I truly appreciate your sincere response!

Please circle answers below.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly disagree	**disagree**	**neutral**	**agree**	**strongly agree**

1. I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.

    1   2   3   4   5

2. In ESL classes, I feel more tense and nervous about the presentation than other class activities.

    1   2   3   4   5

3. I feel overwhelmed, because I have to learn the rules about how to give a good presentation in the ESL class.

    1   2   3   4   5

4. It worries me when I know I need to give multiple presentations in the ESL class.

    1   2   3   4   5

5. I worry that I cannot make a good presentation in the ESL class.

    1   2   3   4   5

6. In ESL classes, I start to panic before the presentation even if I have a good preparation for it.

    1   2   3   4   5

7. In ESL classes, I start to panic when I give the presentation without enough preparation.

    1   2   3   4   5

8. I tremble when I know that I will be the next one to give the presentation in ESL class.

    1   2   3   4   5

9. It frightens me when I know the in-class presentation will be graded by the teacher.

    1   2   3   4   5

10. In ESL classes, I'm afraid that my teachers tend to correct mistakes I make during the presentation.

    1   2   3   4   5

11. I don't worry about making mistakes when I give the presentation in the ESL class.

    1   2   3   4   5

12. In ESL classes, sometimes I can't express my true feelings and thoughts in English after I

make mistakes in my presentation, and this situation makes me uncomfortable.
   1   2   3   4   5

13. In ESL classes, when I give presentations, I feel like a different person.
   1   2   3   4   5

14. In the presentation, I may get so nervous that I forget what I know.
   1   2   3   4   5

15. I can feel my heart pounding when I give the presentation in the ESL class.
   1   2   3   4   5

16. In the process of giving presentation, I often stutter or repeat words when the teacher and other classmates gaze at me.
   1   2   3   4   5

17. I keep thinking that the other students are better at giving presentations in English than I am.
   1   2   3   4   5

18. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I give the presentation.
   1   2   3   4   5

19. It embarrasses me to volunteer oral comments on my classmates' presentations in English.
   1   2   3   4   5

20. I am usually at ease after finishing my presentation in the class.
   1   2   3   4   5

21. After giving the presentation, I feel relaxed and happy when the teacher praises my performance.
   1   2   3   4   5

22. I get nervous when the teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance after I finish the presentation.
   1   2   3   4   5

23. I get upset when I don't understand the teacher's specific feedback on my presentation.
   1   2   3   4   5

STUDY 2 LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS INTERVIEW

Thank you very much for participating in this study. The following questions of this interview are concerning your anxiety in the language class, particularly in the in-class presentation. The results of this survey will be used only for the research purpose. Therefore, please honestly provide your answers. I truly appreciate your sincere response!

Name:
Gender: Male/ Female
Age:

1. Do you think your personality is introvert or extrovert?
   (你认为你的性格是内向还是外向？)
2. Can you please share with me your English learning experience? How do you think of your English proficiency?
   (你愿意和我分享一下你的英语学习经历么？你觉得自己英语水平怎么样？)
3. What is your previous experience about in-class presentations? Did you feel tense or not?
   (你以前有过英语课堂演讲经历么？会不会紧张？)
4. Do you like in-class presentations or similar oral activities? And why?
   (你喜欢课堂演讲或者类似的课堂口语练习么？为什么？)
5. Do you feel tense or nervous when you give in-class presentation in English? Why?
   (用英语演讲会使你紧张么？为什么？)
6. In your opinion, what are the causes of your nervousness or anxiety in the presentation?
   (你觉得一般什么原因会使你在课堂演讲中感到紧张？)
7. Are there any ways for you to cope with your nervousness or anxiety in the presentations? If yes, please provide some details.（If the student seems not clear about the question, I would ask "what procedures may help you feel relieved? ）
   (你有没有什么特定的方式减轻或者转移这些演讲中的压力？如果有的话，能不能详细的介绍一下？)

VITA

Yusi Chen

EDUCATION

Master of Arts in English, TESOL option (Teaching English to speakers of other languages)
Marshall University, Huntington, USA, December 2015
Thesis: ESL Students' Language Anxiety in In-class Oral Presentations
Committee: Dr. Ryan Angus and Dr. Bob Hong, Dr. Mimi Li

Bachelor of Arts in English, Minor in Business English
Shanxi University of Finance and Economics, Taiyuan, China, July, 2013
Graduated with Honors

HONORS AND AWARDS

Marshall University
2014   Marshall University Research Scholars Award ($250)

Shanxi University of Finance and Economics
2013   Honor of Excellent Graduation Thesis (¥ 700)
                Shanxi University of Finance and Economics

2012   Competitive Academic Student Scholarship (¥ 150)
                Shanxi University of Finance and Economics

2009-2012   Distinguished College Student Award,
                Shanxi University of Finance and Economics

RESEARCH/SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES

Presentations at Professional Meetings
International

    Chen, Y. (2015, October). Helping ESL Students identify and reduce Speaking Anxiety in In-class oral Presentations. Paper presented at Tri- TESOL (WAESOL, ORTESOL and BC TEAL) Conference, Des Moines, WA.

Regional/local

    Chen, Y. (2015, April). ESL Students' Language Anxiety in In-class Oral Presentations. Paper session. Paper presented at West Virginia TESOL (WVTESOL) Annual Professional Development Conference, Charleston, WV.

    Chen, Y. (2015, October). Making In-class Oral Presentations Stress Free: Focusing on Reducing ESL Students' Speaking Anxiety. Paper session. Paper presented at Ohio TESOL Conference, Columbus, OH.

Attendances at Professional Meetings

    2015, May. The attendance at Changes and Challenges in Language Teacher Education Ninth International Conference on Language Teacher Education (CARLA

Conference), Minneapolis, MN.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION AND SERVICE

Membership

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

West Virginia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (WVTESOL)

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

06/2013-09/2013   Internship, Yunan Education Center for International Exchange, Yunnan, Kunming, China
- To collect date; translate, type and put files in order

03/2013-05/2013   Internship, Environmental protection Bureau, Panlong district , Kuming, Yunnan, China
- To collect date; translate, type and put files in order

SPECIAL ABILITIES & TALENTS

- Fluent Chinese，English (near native), Japanese (reading ability)
- Outstanding Traditional Chinese Instrument Player(Guqin)
- Microsoft Office (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint)