Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Among Thai Postgraduate Students in UK Universities

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Abstract

The present study aimed to identify the speaking anxiety level among Thai postgraduate students in UK universities, their attitudes towards their own English-speaking performance and native speakers, and the impact of the anxiety on their physical and cognitive well-being which might adversely affect their learning experiences at their universities. An adapted version of Horwitz's (1986) FLCAS questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed as research instruments. The participants were recruited through probability sampling in which 58 Thai postgraduate students in UK universities participated in the study by completing the questionnaire while 4 of them also took part in the interviews. The results indicate that the students experience medium speaking-anxiety level in which three most common anxiety-inducing situations were identified including ''giving a presentation of an assignment or a project that would be graded by the instructors', 'delivering a speech or talking in front of the class particularly without preparation', and 'not being understood by others or having to repeat themselves'. In terms of their attitudes, it was found that the students have 'negative attitudes' towards their own English-speaking performance. However, as for their attitudes towards native speakers, the findings seemed to vary significantly and could not reach a solid conclusion. In terms of the impact of the anxiety, it was found that the anxiety could cause them to 'become nervous and confused', 'forget what they are about to say and stammer while speaking', 'freeze up or withdraw themselves from a conversation', and 'experience heart palpitations'. The findings provide some pedagogical implications for practitioners of how to create a low-anxiety classroom environment for students in which strategies such as 'not calling students' name and let them volunteer their answers willingly', and 'showing positive gestures' are believed to be effective in helping to alleviate the students' anxiety in class.

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List of Abbreviations

FLCAS	Foreign Language Anxiety Scale
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
FNE	Fear of negative evaluation
CA	Communication Apprehension
TA	Test Anxiety
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
PRPSA	Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety
PSCAS	Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale
WTC	Willingness to communicate
L1	First language
L2	Second Language

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

When it comes to 'anxiety', many researchers have regarded the term as the feeling of uneasiness, tension, apprehension or self-doubt which is triggered by the fear or excessive unrealistic worry that interferes with everyday routines and social interactions (Horwitz et al, 1986; Spielberger, 1983; Suleimenova, 2013). However, when the anxiety is related to foreign language, it becomes known as 'foreign language anxiety' (Hashemi and Abbasi, 2013, p. 640). The definitions of foreign language anxiety have been proposed by many researchers. In the past, these include "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al, 1986, p. 128) or the feeling of tension and apprehension which is directly linked to second language learning (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). Until more recently, Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014) have redefined it as the negative emotional reaction that occurs when learning or using a second language.

Over the past few decades, many scholars have been trying to explore the effects of foreign language anxiety on students' ability to learn and to use languages. While most of the researchers recognize foreign language anxiety as a common factor that adversely affects individuals' foreign language speaking performance (Horwitz et al, 1986; Suleimenova, 2013; Tallon, 2009; Woodrow, 2006), others, on the contrary, reported no positive correlation or mixed results. Scovel (1978) explained that this is because anxiety is not a unitary construct that could simply be measured as high or low amounts. Additionally, most of the studies that were conducted lack the precision in terms of the conceptualization and measurement of anxiety, which lead to an unclear and inconsistent result (ibid).

1.2 Rationale and Context of the Study

It is estimated that about one third of the students, or more, experience moderate to severe level of speaking anxiety (Horwitz, 2000; Liu and Jackson, 2008). Study conducted by Burden's (2004), for instance, found that about half of 289 Japanese students suffered from the anxiety. This indicates that language anxiety is considered as a common phenomenon that occurs among students and speakers of foreign languages. As the anxiety is known to have a direct debilitating effect on students' foreign language speaking performance (Horwitz et al,

1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994; Suleimenova, 2013; Öztürk and Gürbüz, 2014), it could obstruct international students' learning experiences in their universities as they are required to use English as a medium of communication in their classes. Compared with domestic students, they are more prone to experience anxiety, stress, and loneliness as they face academic and social transition in another country as well as cultural and English language adjustment in the new environment (Andrade. 2006). This is because as part of their qualifications, English-speaking is considered a requirement for them since they have to communicate and participate in discussions and activities among their peers with different nationalities and the English native-speaker instructors using only the English language throughout the class. While some of the international students might have IELTS scores as a proof of their English language proficiency, others might opt for studying in an English pre-sessional course as a prerequisite for entering their university programs. Nonetheless, this does not normally guarantee that they could converse in English comfortably when in their university classes. Those who are unable to communicate due to the speaking anxiety might experience 'mental block' and choose to remain silent during the discussions which resulted in their missed opportunity to express their thoughts and exchange ideas with their classmates and instructors which would adversely affect their quality of learning and class experiences. Study conducted by Brown (2008), for instance, found that despite entering their courses with a minimum IELTS scores as required by the institution, international postgraduate students at a university in the South of England still felt disadvantaged by their particularly poor spoken English and suffered feelings of anxiety, shame and inferiority. As a consequence, speaking anxiety among international students is an issue that should not be overlooked. Despite this fact, only a small number of studies have been done with Thai learners especially as international students. Additionally, most of the researchers which have been conducted were carried out in Thai English language classroom context and not in a content university classroom.

Of all the places worldwide, the UK is typically known to be one of the top destinations for Thai students to pursue their degrees in higher education in which the number of Thai students studying in the UK is increasing consistently in each academic year. Myriad studies indicate that the main reasons why most Thai students choose to obtain a degree in higher education in the UK include 1) the opportunity to improve their English language skills, 2) the increased status through the acquisition of a recognized qualification, and 3) a better career with higher financial rewards after their graduation (Pimpa, 2005; Tantivorakulchai,

2014; Tarry, 2008). As one of the Thai students who is currently studying in postgraduate program at a UK university myself, I find it suitable and beneficial to explore the topic within this context as it can be directly related to my own experiences.

1.3 Aim of the Study

This research aims to investigate on the impact of speaking anxiety on Thai postgraduate students in UK universities' English-speaking performance in classes at their universities.

Additionally, the study would identify the general level of speaking anxiety among the participants as well as their attitudes towards their own English-speaking performance and native speakers of English. The study would provide pedagogical implications and suggestions for practitioners of how to create a more low-anxiety classroom when it comes to teaching that involves the use of English as a medium of communication.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides a background, purpose, rationale and the context of the study. In Chapter 2, the literature review explores the definition of speaking anxiety, common sources, its effects on individuals' speaking performance, empirical findings from previous studies and English-speaking anxiety among Thai learners. For Chapter 3, I introduce the methods of data collection and analysis which were employed in the study in order to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 includes an extensive analysis on the data from the questionnaire and the interview. Lastly, in Chapter 5 general conclusion of the study including its pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research are discussed.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 What is foreign language anxiety?

When it comes to educational research, 'anxiety' is typically classified into two types. These include 'trait anxiety' and 'state anxiety' (Spielberger, 1983). Trait anxiety is perceived as a relatively stable personality, which means that individuals who are trait anxious have more tendency to become anxious across various situations (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Scovel, 1978; Woodlow, 2006). State anxiety, in contrast, is a temporary undesirable emotional state or an apprehension which individuals experience at a particular moment (Scovel, 1978; Spielberger, 1983; Woodlow, 2006). What makes language anxiety different, however, is the fact that it is believed to be independent from these types of anxiety and is recognized as a construct of situation-specific anxiety that concerns performance evaluation within academic and social context (Horwitz et al, 1986). This means that language anxiety generally occurs as a response to a specific type of situation or event such as public speaking, examinations, or class participation (Ellis, 1994).

Horwitz et al (1986) links language anxiety to three performance related anxieties: 1) communication apprehension, 2) test-anxiety, and 3) fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is known to be a type of fear associated with real or anticipated communication with another person (McCroskey, 1984) in which students who exhibit communication apprehension generally feel uncomfortable when communicating in the target language in front of others mostly due to their limited knowledge or skills of the language in terms of speaking and listening (Tsiplakides and Keramida, 2009). Test-anxiety is a type of performance anxiety arising from the fear of failure normally originated from students' own unrealistic expectations and demands on themselves that anything less than a perfect test performance is deemed a failure (Horwitz et al, 1986). Students who experience test anxiety perceive oral production as a test situation rather than an opportunity for communication and skills improvement (Ansari, 2015). Fear of negative evaluation, lastly, is the manifestation of learners' worry over the opinions of others and a higher form of concern over errors (Gkonou, 2014) such as when students are answering questions in class in which they would generally fear that they would be negatively evaluated by the teachers or their classmates.

According to Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001), anxiety can usually be measured in one of three ways including by 'behavioural tests', 'self-report of internal feeling and reactions' which or by 'physiological tests'. However, of all these three measurements, 'self-report' is believed to be most precise in focusing on a specific affective construct such as foreign language anxiety (ibid). Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which was developed by Horwitz (1986) is the most widely used 'self-report' tool among researchers who investigated on foreign language anxiety. FLCAS is a 33-item questionnaire which uses Likert scale to identify language anxiety particularly the three performance related anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

2.2 Sources of Speaking anxiety

Sources of speaking anxiety have been identified differently by various researchers. Aydin (2014), for instance, claimed that there are four common factors which may contribute to the anxiety. These include personal reasons, learners' beliefs, teacher's manner in the class, and teaching and testing procedures. First of all, in terms of personal reasons and learner's beliefs, these often involve students' own self-assessment of speaking ability and self-comparison to others. Studies found that perfectionist and individuals who appear to be more critical of their abilities are more likely to have higher level of foreign language anxiety (Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002). Similarly, Wilson (2006) claimed that some learners also tend to have an unrealistic belief that in order to speak the foreign languages appropriately, they must first possess perfect pronunciation skills or accent so as to not embarrass themselves or to be negatively judged when conversing with others using the languages. This aligns with Subaşi's (2010) study which found that students tend to become less anxious if they are confident in their ability. Thus, this type of fear is directly associated with the fear of negative evaluation which would cause them to avoid speaking and participating in the classroom activities for fear of making an unfavourable social impression to their classmates and teachers or instructors (Aydin, 2014).

Secondly, in terms of teacher's manner in class, Aydin (2014) claimed that students are often influenced by their personal feelings towards their educators as well as their perceptions of the interactions that occur between them. A study by Yan and Horwitz (2008), for instance, appears to support this notion, in which it was found that practitioners who have a sense of humour and good rapport with the students could help students to become less anxious.

Lastly, teaching and testing procedures. According to Aydin (2014), when it comes to teaching procedures, the real anxiety-evoking situation for students is often linked to having to speak or perform in front of others while for testing procedures, this normally comes from students own unrealistic demands they place on themselves due to their perfectionist personality.

Besides these aspects, a study conducted by Rajitha and Alamelu (2020) which employed an open-ended questionnaire to collect data from undergraduate Art and Science final year students of various disciplines suggested that the sources of speaking anxiety can be identified as either 'external factor' or 'internal factor'. An external factor is associated with students' own language proficiency such as their lack of English knowledge and grammar and confidence in their English pronunciation as well as their inner feel and the thoughts of peers evaluation. This aligns with other studies which suggest that high level of speaking anxiety is associated with low level of linguistic knowledge and English language proficiency (Aida, 1994; Cheng, 2002; Jee, 2016). This means that students with higher English language proficiency are less likely to experience speaking anxiety. In terms of internal factors, these often include 'stage fear' which is aroused when an individual is required to speak or perform in front of the audience, 'lack of confidence' which occur when students are wanted or forced to make an impression on the audience but lack self-confidence on their own capabilities, and 'shyness'.

Taly and Paramasivam's (2020) research is another example of the study that aimed to find the causes of the anxiety. The study was conducted among postgraduate international students who were studying in Applied Linguistics major at a public university in Malaysia. The participants were chosen based on observation of their class presentation as well as an informal interview to measure their feeling of anxiety when speaking. Two experienced lecturers who teach English as a second or foreign language in the university were also invited to take part in this research. The aims of the study were to find out the most common sources of the anxiety that the students experience when speaking English in the academic context of a university as well as the strategies that they use to cope with it. To do so, two separate semi-structured interviews the students and the lecturers were employed, in order to provide them the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences on the matter. It was found that in terms of the sources of the anxiety, 'formality of classroom environment', 'fear for oral presentation', 'fear of making mistakes and fear of evaluation', 'fear of English

language lecturers', 'self-related cognition and self-perception', 'fear of accurate pronunciation', 'fear of correct grammar', and 'fear of correct vocabulary' appeared to be the common reasons of speaking anxiety among the participants. As for their strategies to cope with the anxiety, the authors classified them into three main categories including 'affective strategy', 'cognitive strategy', and 'behavioural strategy'. Affective strategy includes the use of initial technique to reduce the effect of the anxiety such as 'deep breathing' and supportive feedback from lecturers. Cognitive strategy involves the changing of their mindset to become more positive and confident. Behavioural strategy, lastly, includes 'preparation or practice', 'avoidance of eye contact', 'giving immediate response to instructors' questions', 'taking part in as many speaking activities as possible', and 'peer seeking and physical masking behaviour'.

2.3 Public speaking as a source of speaking anxiety

The relationship between public speaking and anxiety is another topic that has piqued many researchers interest. Although the term public speaking can be defined in different ways, it mostly involves the idea of a process of designing and delivering a message to audiences. Hayaramae (2016, p.4), for instance, describes it as "a type of oral presentation in which a speaker addresses an audience". Similar definition is also given by Verderber et al (2011, p. 2 as cited in Raja, 2017) who refers to it as "a sustained formal presentation by a speaker to an audience". Thus, public speaking is a type of speaking activity which is quite alike to presentation (Yee and Abidin, 2014). Ellis (1994) has classified public speaking as one of the specific types of situation that can cause language anxiety. This means that if public speaking is done in second language (L2), it could therefore be one of the causes of foreign language anxiety or speaking anxiety among students.

Yee and Abidin (2014) claimed that public speaking evokes a type of speaking anxiety that can be used to improve ESL learners' speaking skills and help them overcome their foreign language anxiety. In their paper, they made a link with the idea to Gardner's integrative motivation theory and Piaget's cognitive theory and suggested that if the students are introduced with a public speaking programme that allows them to practice speaking English in a positive, non-threatening and encouraging environment, they would be able to overcome their fear in speaking English as well as improving their motivation level or the willingness to speak English.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Raja (2017) which was carried out among Computer Sciences undergraduate students at a private sector business school in Karachi using a self-administered questionnaire found that the fear of public speaking could be overcome if certain strategies were employed. The examples of those strategies include 'better preparation and understanding of the topic to eliminate the chance of mistake being made during the activity', 'pausing when losing track of what they are saying or begin to feel nervous', 'practicing complete speech several times with a small number of people who you feel at ease with', and 'anticipating responses from the audience to be able to answer them more confidently'. As public speaking is a type of oral performance which is similar to other types of speaking activities such as speaking in front of the class and giving a presentation, it is believed that these strategies could also be applied to them as well in order to help students with foreign language anxiety.

Another study by Sugiyati and Indriani (2021) attempted to identify the level of public speaking anxiety among EFL students and the primary causes of the anxiety. The study was conducted among third-semester students of the Education Study Program Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Tidar using Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) which was proposed by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) as their research instrument. It was found that more than half of the students (58.8%) experienced a medium level of public speaking anxiety. As for the causes, 'fear of negative evaluation' appeared to be the major anxiety-provoking factor followed by 'communication apprehension' and 'test anxiety'.

In Thai context, a study which was done by Kalra and Siribud's (2020) employed three different types of research instruments including 'classroom observation', 'semi-structured interview', and 'questionnaire' to investigate on public speaking anxiety problem among Thai EFL students. The results indicate that the anxiety was found to be the cause of students' lower self-confidence, self-esteem and risk-taking ability which ultimately hampers with their proficiency in the foreign language. Another example is a study which was conducted by Plangkham and Porkaew (2012). The research aimed to find out the level of anxiety at different stages of public speaking including 'pre-preparation', 'preparation', 'pre-performance' and 'performance' among Thai EFL undergraduate students who were studying in English public speaking classes. Questionnaire which was adapted from McCroskey's (1970) Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety or PRPSA was employed as the research

instrument. It was found that the students tend to become most anxious at the 'performance stage' or when they have to deliver the speech indicating that 'performing the public speaking' caused them more anxiety than 'the anticipation of having to perform the public speaking'.

2.4 Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety on Students' English-Speaking Performance

The effects of foreign language anxiety were found from many studies to be varied depending on the level of the anxiety. This can range from the students getting confused to freezing up when speaking or communicating in foreign languages (Ortega, 2009). According to Suleimenova (2013), speaking anxiety can act as a disruption to the retrieval of information which means that it could impede the flow of students' speech during their conversations which is in line with Tobias's (1986) claim that the anxiety could impair students' ability to take in information, process it, and retrieve it when needed. This is one of the reasons why students with higher foreign language anxiety tend to have more difficulty when speaking foreign languages than those with lower speaking-anxiety level. Additionally, the anxiety could also cause them to remain silent in class to avoid making mistakes that could do harm to their self-image (Aydin, 2014). Therefore, it can be said that speaking anxiety could lessen students' quality of learning in classes as it would cause them to refrain from participating in classroom activities and discussions with other classmates. Moreover, for international students, Woodrow (2006) stated that speaking anxiety can also influence their adaptation to the target environment as well as their achievement of their educational goals. This is because as they have to communicate in English not just in the classroom but also in their daily lives, the anxiety would therefore hinder their speaking performance which in turns obstruct their adjustment to the environment and adversely affect their learning in classes.

The effects of speaking anxiety on students' willingness to communicate or WTC is another topic that has attracted the attention of many researchers. WTC is defined as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2" (MacIntyre et al (1998, p. 547) or "an underlying continuum representing the predisposition toward or away from communicating, given the choice" (MacIntyre et al, 2001, p. 538). In order words, it refers to the likelihood of the students to be engaged in communication when they have a free choice to do so. According to McCroskey (1990), there are five known variables that lead to different level of willingness to communicate including 'introversion'

which refers when individuals are characterized by their shy and timid nature, 'self-esteem' or a person's evaluation or his or her own self-worth, 'communication competence' which could be defined as the ability to achieve communicative goals in a socially appropriate manner (Kiessling and Fabry, 2021), 'cultural diversity' and 'communication apprehension'.

Besides these factors, many scholars have been trying to find out whether foreign language anxiety could be another predictor of the students' lower willingness to communicate in L2. A study conducted by Rastegar and Karami (2015) is one of the researches that aimed to identify the relationship between the two variables. The study was carried out among English literature and English translation major students at Kerman University. Two types of questionnaires were employed including Horwitz's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and an adapted version of Macintyre's (2001) Willingness to Communicate Scale. It was found that there was a significant negative relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and the students' willingness to communicate which means that the higher the students' speaking anxiety, the lower their willingness to communicate in L2. The results are in line with the findings from Manipuspika's study (2018) which was conducted among students studying in an English Department at the University of Brawijaya in Indonesia using similar research instruments. The study has shown that there was a strong positive correlation between students' foreign language anxiety and their willingness to communicate.

Despite all these known adverse effects, there are also many other studies which indicate that foreign language anxiety does not only have negative impact on the students' foreign language speaking performance but could also influence them in a positive way. Alpert and Haber (1960, as cited in Ellis 1994) were the first scholars who differentiated 'facilitating anxiety' from 'debilitating anxiety' and suggested that anxiety can either be positive or negative in which some scholars believed that whether anxiety is facilitating or debilitating depends on its level (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Scovel, 1978). Heng and Abdullah (2012) claimed that facilitating anxiety can motivate learners to perform more efficiently and to make extra effort to overcome feelings of anxiety in which they suggested that teachers must learn to identity and enhance facilitating anxiety while reducing the negative for the benefits of the students. Several studies appeared to support this claim. Kleinmann (1977) who conducted an early study using this framework found that students with facilitating anxiety tend to have more courage to take risk and have fewer avoidance behaviours which

help them to not be afraid of making mistakes when speaking a foreign language. Another research conducted by Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) found that the facilitating side of the speaking anxiety appeared to help some of the students to become more careful and alert while speaking English. From this reason, several researchers also believed that facilitating could be utilised by practitioners to support learners in class (Gregersen et al, 2014; Tran and Moni, 2015).

2.5 Empirical findings on speaking anxiety

A study conducted by Akkakoson (2016) which was carried out among Thai university students studying English Conversation courses at a university in Thailand found that the vast majority of the students appeared to experience medium level of anxiety. This was measured by the criteria which was established by the researcher himself using the overall mean scores that were based on participants' responses in the questionnaire as a measurement. The questionnaire which was employed in his study was a modified version of Horwitz's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale which he termed MFLCAS. Additionally, Student Interview Form (SIF) was used to measure students' attitudes their own English speaking and to find the sources of the anxiety in speaking. It was found that 70.45% of the participants reported having positive opinions about speaking English in the classroom in which 'students' limited vocabulary repertoire' appeared to be the most common source of the anxiety. When considering the anxiety level experienced by the participants by dimensions, it was found that 'test-anxiety' (TA) was the most dominant source of anxiety with 'fear of negative evaluation' being the second and 'communication apprehension' (CA) being the least experienced component. Interestingly, Sadighi and Dastpak's (2017) research also yields similar results. The study was conducted among Iranian English language learners in which FLCAS was also employed to identify the common causes of the speaking anxiety. It was found that 'fear of making mistakes' appears to be the major factor for the anxiety followed by the 'fear of negative evaluation' and 'limited vocabulary knowledge'.

These findings, however, contradict the results from Woodrow's (2006) study. In her study, FLCAS questionnaire as well as IELTS oral type assessment were administered. The participants were advanced English for academic purposes (EAP) students who were studying on intensive EAP courses in preparation for entering Australia universities. It was found that 'communication apprehension' (AP) appears to be the most frequent source of

anxiety among the students. She explained that this might be due to the fact that the students are living in the target language environment which means that they are required to communicate in English not just in the classroom but also in daily life, especially when it comes to the students having interactions with native speakers. The result also aligns with Mak's (2011) study which was carried out among Chinese ESL first-year university students in Hong Kong which found uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers' to be the second most anxiety-inducing factor with 'speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation' being the first.

Research conducted by Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) was another study which was done among international students. The participants include three African Nigerians, three Iranians and two Algerians who were studying in a Malaysian university in which they were all postgraduate students. Observations and interviews were employed for data collection. It was found that 'fear of being in public and shyness', 'fear of negative evaluation', and fear of speaking inaccurately were the most common reasons for the anxiety among the participants. The study also found that when experiencing speaking anxiety, certain strategies for coping with the anxiety are normally employed by the students. These include, 'remaining silent' to avoid participating in speech communication in class, 'avoiding eye contact' or pretending to be busy themselves with writing or checking their bags, 'being with friends' which is when they tend to choose to sit together among friends with same nationality, and 'expressive reactions' or when they smile to mask their true feelings which is a characteristic of non-verbal communication. Additionally, they suggested that there are four strategies that lecturers may employ to help reduce their students' speaking anxiety including 1) not calling students' name' and let them volunteer their answers willingly, 2) making jokes and stories' to break the ice and grab their attention, 3) appreciating students' answers and 4) showing positive gestures such as eye contact were found to be the best ways to help alleviate their anxiety. This parallels with Aydin's (2014) claim that teacher's manner in class can have a direct impact on students' speaking anxiety.

A study which was carried out by Badrasawi et al (2020) is another example of the research which was conducted in a content university classroom context and not in a foreign language learning classroom. Additionally, the study was done among the participants who were international postgraduate students in which the participants of the study were school teachers undertaking a master's degree at the International Islamic University Malaysia at a faculty of education. The researchers employed a cross-sectional survey which was an

adapted version of FLCAS questionnaire to measure the participants' level of English-speaking anxiety and to identify its factors. It was revealed that the majority of the participants did not show high levels of speaking anxiety. As for the courses of the anxiety, three most common concerns have been identified including 'not being able to express themselves effectively in English', 'making mistakes in speaking', and 'lecturers' reactions to their mistakes'.

2.6 English-speaking anxiety among Thai learners

Of all the four key language skills, speaking has always been one of the most difficult English language skills for Thai learners to achieve. While most Thai students attain high score in English examinations and possess good English grammatical knowledge, most of them are still unable to converse well in English especially in the real world. Many studies have criticized the Thai educational system as well as the teachers for not providing Thai students enough opportunity to communicate in English in the classroom which appears to be the cause of the issue (Khamkhien, 2010; Sasum and Weeks, 2018). Others specify 'anxiety' as the major problem in speaking English for Thai students (Akkakoson, 2016; Hadi et al, 2021; Inphoo and Nomnian, 2019). The most common reactions found among Thai students experiencing speaking anxiety is to become passive and shy when speaking English or being in complete silence when faced with questions that they could not answer in English. Ambele and Boonsuk (2018) suggests that this is because 'silence' is a common face-saving politeness strategy that most Thai students often employ when they are uncertain of their language proficiency for fear of making mistakes in English or to be judged negatively as a bad English speaker.

In terms of the most common sources of speaking anxiety among Thai students, a study conducted by Chinpakdee (2015) which employed FLCAS questionnaire as well as focus group interviews to collect data among Thai EFL learners has identified four major anxiety-inducing factors including 'academic evaluation', 'fear negative evaluations', 'comprehension problems' and 'teachers-related factors'. In terms of academic evaluation, this typically refers to the type of situation where test scores or course grades are involved which lead to declining confidence in their use of English. As for fear negative evaluations, most of the participants stated that they were afraid of being ridiculed, humiliated, and judged by others as being incompetent. Comprehension problems is another common concern among

Thai EFL learners which is when the participants become anxious when they could not fully understand their interlocutors in which Chinpakdee (2015) claimed that this could happen both inside of outside of the classrooms. Teachers-related factors, lastly, are mostly related to teachers' personality and their use of English in class.

A study which was carried out by Palaleo and Srikrajang (2018) is another example of the research which identified the causes foreign language anxiety among Thai students. The study was carried out among Thai Nursing students at Boromarajonani College of Nursing using FLCAS questionnaire as their research instrument. Two main sources of the anxiety have been identified which include 'fear of negative evaluation' especially the type of situation when the students are being asked to answer without preparation as well as their belief that other students are better than them and 'communication apprehension' particularly when they have to speak without preparation, speaking in front of other students, and their self-doubt in their own ability. Nonetheless, these findings and assumptions are all based on Thai students studying in Thailand and did not include those studying in another country. Thus, from these points of view, I wish to investigate whether these would appear to be truthful in the case of Thai international students studying in an English-speaking country.

2.7 Research Questions

From the literature, it appears that foreign language anxiety or speaking anxiety is a global phenomenon that has a negative impact on students all around the world. It has been proven by many researchers that the anxiety could interfere with the students' English-speaking performance in which its effects can range from causing them to become confused or freezing up while speaking, impeding the flow of their speech during their conversations to depriving them of their willingness to communicate. For students studying in a foreign language classroom and a content university classroom that requires the use of English as a medium of communication, these could adversely affect their learning experiences as it would lower their engagement over the lessons. For instance, instead of participating in classroom discussions and activities, they might prefer to remain silent throughout the class due to their difficulty in English speaking and their fear that they might embarrass themselves if they make mistakes while speaking.

In addition, it was found that most of the empirical researches that have been conducted on speaking anxiety including those in Thai context were focusing on exploring 5 major areas which include 'the sources of the anxiety', 'the impact of the anxiety', 'the level of speaking anxiety among students', and 'the attitudes of students'. From this reason, three research questions were formulated based on these key areas in an attempt to better understand the issue through the participants' experiences as international students and their own perceptions on the anxiety as the results could then be compared with those from the previous studies in order to find the correlation and the differences which may lead to pedagogical implications for better practices among practitioners who wish to create a low-anxiety classroom environment for their students:

1. What is the average level of foreign language anxiety among Thai postgraduate students in UK universities?

For this research question, many studies have indicated that language anxiety level appears to be associated with individuals' language proficiency (Aida, 1994; Cheng, 2002; Ellis, 2015; Jee, 2016). This means that students with higher language proficiency tend to experience lower level of language anxiety, and vice versa. Since the participants in this study were all postgraduate students in UK universities, it is assumed that they would have higher level of language proficiency compared with other types of students as most of them have 6.5 or higher IELTS score as one of the qualifications to study in the UK. For this reason, it is hypothesized that they would have medium-anxiety level.

2. What are Thai postgraduate students in UK universities' attitudes towards their own English-speaking performance and native speakers of English?

For the second research question, it is predicted that Thai postgraduate students in UK universities would have positive attitudes towards their own English-speaking performance as in line with Akkakoson's (2016) study which found that most of the participants who were Thai students studying in an English course at a Thai university reported having positive attitudes towards their own English speaking. As for their attitudes towards native English speakers, since several studies have indicated that 'interaction with native speakers' appeared to be the most common causes of speaking anxiety (Mak, 2011; Woodrow, 2006), it is hypothesized that the vast majority of participants in this study would have 'negative' attitudes towards native speakers of English as well.

3. What is the impact of speaking anxiety on Thai postgraduate students in UK universities?
For the last research question, it is speculated that speaking anxiety could have a direct impact on Thai postgraduate students in UK universities' physical and cognitive wellbeing such as getting nervous and forgetting things they know, heart pounding, or panicking as these signs are also widely found in others studies. Moreover, it is believed that the anxiety could adversely affect their English-speaking performance as indicated by the findings from the literature such as causing them to prefer to remain silent in order to avoid making mistakes which might embarrass themselves (Aydin, 2014), impeding their speaking fluency by causing them to freeze up or momentarily forget what they are saying (Ortega, 2009), and adversely affecting their willingness to communicate (Rastegar and Karami, 2015; Manipuspika, 2018). Additionally, as Ambele and Boonsuk's study (2018) indicated that the use of 'silent' is a common face-saving act that is generally employed by many Thai students when they are uncertain of their English language proficiency, it is believed that this strategy might also be used among Thai postgraduate students in UK universities as well.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Research Paradigm

Paradigm helps organize and construct a research, which in turns, improves its quality. This study follows an interpretivist paradigm which places its emphasis on the understanding of the subjective world of human experience (Guba and Lincoln, 1989 as cited in Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Interpretivism believes that reality is 'socially constructed' which means that the same 'objective' reality is experienced and understood by different people in different ways (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Interpretivist paradigm therefore allows researchers to treat the context of the research and its situation as unique based on the given circumstances and the participants involved (Alharahsheh, 2020). From this reason, I find the paradigm suitable for my study as the aim of the research is to understand foreign language anxiety through the perspectives and the experiences of Thai postgraduate students in UK universities.

3.1.2 Methods and Instruments

This study utilized a mixed methods research design which means that it includes the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis in a single study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). A questionnaire which was adapted from Horwitz's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was employed in order to measure participants' general level of anxiety as well as to find their attitudes towards their own English speaking and when conversing with native speakers and the impact of the anxiety on the participants. The scale has been widely used in many previous studies and is proven to be highly reliable and valid tool for measurement. 17-items from the original scale were selected and modified to suit the context and the purpose of the study. For example, the original item "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class" has been changed to "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English in class at my university" as the context of the study is not in a foreign language classroom but in a content university classroom.

Each item from the questionnaire reflects different dimension and/or aspects of the anxiety as followed: item number 2, 4, 9 reflect Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), item number 3, 7, 14 reflect Communication Apprehension (CA), item number 11, 16, 17 reflect Test-anxiety

(TA), item number 1 and 12 reflect participants' attitudes towards their own English speaking while 10 and 15 reflect their attitudes when they have to converse with native speakers of English and item number 5, 6, 8, 13 reflect participants' reactions or symptoms in response to the anxiety. However, it should be noted that test-anxiety (TA) in this context of the study refers to particular oral speaking activities or assessment at the students' universities such as when giving a presentation of a project or dissertation or when presenting their oral assignments which would affect their grades in the programs that they are studying and does not refer to English oral examination as in a foreign language classroom. A Likert Scale was used with choices ranging from "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral, "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree", in which the total sum and percentages were calculated based on the number of responses in each choice. The items were also assigned value based on 5-point Likert Scale from the highest, "Strongly Agree" which equals to 5 points, to the lowest, "Strongly Disagree" which equals to 1 point in order to calculate for the mean to answer some research question. Additionally, a semi-structured interview was conducted to gain a more in-depth understanding of the issue. Most of the questions which were used during the interview were similar to the items from FLCAS in which they aimed to answer the three research questions. Their statements were then used as part of the analysis to support and to find correlation with the results from the questionnaire.

3.1.3 Participants and Research site

The participants were Thai postgraduate students who are currently studying in UK universities in different programs. They were recruited from social media site which is an online community for Thai students in the UK (Thai students in UK). Although the group consists of different types of students, for examples undergraduate/ postgraduate students or those studying in a language course, only current postgraduate students were asked to participate in the study. Initially, it was expected that the number of responses returned would be between 40 – 50. However, 58 forms were received. In addition, 4 participants from the same group were asked to participate in the interview including 1 Energy and Sustainability major student, 1 Linguistics major student, 1 Bioscience major student, and 1 Business Management major student. Since the data came from probability sampling or when the participants involved in the study were randomly selected or had equal chance to be part of the research, the risk of systemic bias is minimized (Acharya et al, 2013; Cohen et al, 2018).

3.2 Ethical Considerations

Since all of the participants are students studying a master's degree in UK universities, they are all over 22 years old of age. Moreover, as the participants were recruited from the social media site and not from an institution, they participated in the study willingly and individually as consenting adults. Before completing the questionnaire form, they were asked to read the Plain Language Statement in order for them to understand the purpose and their involvement in the study and to sign the Consent Forms. Similar procedures were also carried out when the interviews were conducted. Furthermore, the questions used in both the questionnaire and the interviews were appropriate and did not cause offense or distress to the participants in which they were also notified that they could withdraw from the study at any moment when they feel uncomfortable. All of the data are kept in secrecy. The anonymity and the confidentiality of the participants' identity and their disclosure of private information are guaranteed.

3.3 Data Analysis

For the first research question, the responses from the participants in FLCAS questionnaire were assigned value based on 5-point Likert scale and calculated in order to find the mean scores and standard deviation. The mean score is used to measure participant's average speaking anxiety level based on Akkakoson's (2016) established criteria. Additionally, the scores from certain FLCAS items which reflect different components of performance related anxiety were also computed to find out the speaking-anxiety level by dimensions. For the second research question, items from the questionnaire number 1 and 10 are related to asking participants about their attitudes towards their own English speaking, while items 10 and 15 are linked to asking them about their attitudes towards native speakers of English. The number of responses based on their agreement and disagreement in those questions were then combined and illustrated as percentages using table. Similarly, for the last research question, item number 5, 6, 8, 13 from FLCAS questionnaire which reflect participants' reactions or symptoms in response to the anxiety were calculated and reported in the same way to answer the research question. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted among 4 Thai postgraduate students in UK universities. The interview questions were based on FLCAS and aimed to answer the three research questions in which participants' statements from the interviews were used as in-depth data to support and to find correlations with the results from the questionnaire.

3.4 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are perceived as the two most crucial and fundamental features in the evaluation of any measurement instrument for a good research (Mohajan, 2017). Although these concepts are mostly used for testing or evaluating quantitative studies, Golafshani (2013) argued that they can actually be applied in all kinds of research. In quantitative studies, the term 'validity' is defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured while 'reliability' relates to the consistency of a measure (Heale and Twycross, 2015). In qualitative research, these terms, however, are mostly concerned with the idea of 'trustworthiness' and the minimization of bias which may arise when conducting the study in order to improve the quality of the research (Cohen et al, 2018; Noble and Smith, 2015). As this study employed FLCAS questionnaire and interviews as its research instruments, their validity and reliability were assessed.

3.4.1 Validity and reliability of FLCAS

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) has been widely used in many studies to find the sources and the effects of speaking anxiety. The self-report questionnaire was specifically created to accurately measure foreign language anxiety. According to Horwitz et al (1986, p. 129), FLCAS achieved "an alpha coefficient of 0.93 with all items producing significant corrected item-total scale correlations" when first constructed. Other studies which adopted the scale also found similar result. Aida's (1994 as cited in Sadighi and Dastpak, 2017) study, for instance, found that the internal reliability was reported to be 0.80. These have proven the reliability and the validity of the scale.

3.4.2 Validity and reliability of the interviews

According to Cohen et al (2018), one major cause of invalidity in interviews is bias which often arises from the characteristics of the interviewer and the respondent and the substantive content of the questions. Thus, a practical way of achieving validity in interviews is to minimize bias as much as possible (ibid). Research bias which may has an effect on the interview include 'the attitudes, opinions and expectations of the interviewer', 'a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in their own image', 'a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support their notions', 'misperceptions on the part of the interviewer' and 'misunderstanding on the part of the respondent' (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108 as cited in Cohen et al, 2018).

First of all, the questions used in the interviews in this study were formulated based on FLCAS questionnaire. The purpose of the interviews is to compare and to find the correlation between the two sources of data. Therefore, they were not composed from the attitudes, opinions and expectations of myself. Secondly, leading questions were avoided in order to allow the participants to freely express their opinions rather than forcing them to confirm or deny. For instance, instead of asking the participants "Do you get nervous when you have to speak in front of the class?", the following question was used "How do you feel when you have to speak in front of the class?". This allows them to reflect on their experiences and to be able to answer the question truthfully. Lastly, during the interviews, I often asked the participants to clarify themselves when I did not fully understand them the first time as well as to confirm whether they understood what I meant when they exhibited signs of uncertainty in their voice which therefore helps reduce the possibility of misperceptions on my part and the participants'. From these reasons, bias which might have occurred during the interviews were minimized and the validity and reliability of the interviews were assured.

3.5 Reflexivity and Research positionality

My positionality as a postgraduate student in the UK allows me to better understand my participants' perceptions and experiences on speaking anxiety as it puts me in the same position as them. Throughout my studies in the UK, I had a chance to observe most of my classmates who appeared to be dealing with foreign language anxiety which could be seen from the ways they experienced difficulty in participating in the discussions and activities that required them to speak and share their opinions. This made me realise how impactful foreign language anxiety can be on postgraduate students' learning quality at the universities. The experiences therefore help me to formulate a more valid and reliable questionnaire and interviews as most of the items/ questions that were selected and constructed were based on my observation in the classes. Furthermore, during the interviews, I found it easier to build rapport with my participants as the stories and the experiences that they shared were also visible during my observation which allowed me to approach them and ask questions more comfortably. Moreover, despite our roles as researcher and participants, the fact that we are both Thai postgraduate students in UK universities allowed us to treat each other as peers and to establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and power equality. This therefore helped the participants to become more willing to disclose their information without feeling threatened which aided me to gain a more significant data.

Chapter 4 Results and Discussion

In this section, data from both the questionnaire and the interviews are discussed and compared in order to answer the research questions. It was found that most of the data from both sources appeared to be in line with one another which allows for a solid conclusion to be established. Interesting findings arose during the interviews in which participants' statements were then used for further analysis.

4.1 Thai postgraduate students in UK universities' speaking anxiety levels

The first research question intends to find out the average speaking-anxiety level of Thai postgraduate students in UK universities. To answer this research question, Means score and Standard Deviations were used as a measurement in which the total FLCAS score was calculated based on the principle that 'strongly agree' equals to 5 point, 'agree' equals to 4 points, 'neutral' equals to 3 points, 'disagree' equals to 2 points, and 'strongly disagree' equals to 1 point. In addition, the FLCAS scores were computed to identify participants general speaking-anxiety level based on the dimensions as suggested by Horwitz (1986) in which items 2, 4, 9 were calculated for 'fear of negative evaluation' (FNE), items 3, 7, 14 for 'communication apprehension' (CA), and items 11, 16, 17 for 'test-anxiety' (TA). The score was then compared with the criteria which has been established by Akkakoson (2016). According to him, a mean score of 4.21 – 5.00 would indicate the highest level of anxiety, between 3.41 – 4.20 as high anxiety, 2.61 – 3.40 as medium anxiety, 1.81 – 2.60 as low anxiety, and between 1.00 – 1.80 as lowest-anxiety level. In addition, during the interviews, the participants were asked to rank their level of speaking anxiety themselves on a scale of 1 to 10 with '10' being the maximum score and '1' being the least. They were also asked to share their experiences with the anxiety such as the types of situation that could cause the anxiety the most. Their statements were then used to support and compare with the findings from the questionnaire.

Table 1 Participants' Speaking-anxiety level (N = 58)

Speaking-anxiety level	Mean	SD
Participants' average anxiety	3.38	0.64
By dimension		
Test-anxiety (TA)	3.56	1.26
Communication Apprehension (CA)	3.38	1.21
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)	3.34	1.22

The results from the questionnaire for the first research question are shown in table 1. As for the average speaking-anxiety level of Thai postgraduate students in UK universities, it was found that they have the mean score of 3.38. Based on the criteria, this indicates that the vast majority of the participants have 'medium-anxiety level'. In terms of the anxiety level by dimensions, the results have shown that the students achieved the mean score of 3.56 which is considered a high-anxiety level on test-anxiety (TA), 3.38 which equals medium-anxiety level on communication apprehension (CA), and 3.34 which is equivalent to medium-anxiety level on fear of negative evaluation (FNE).

Similarly, findings from the interviews also appeared to align with these results in which when asked to rank how much they normally experience speaking anxiety, 4 out of 4 of the participants responded with the following numbers: "4, 5, 6, 6". These indicate that the participants experience 'medium-anxiety level' which parallels with the findings from the questionnaire. Furthermore, when they were asked to describe the types of situations that can cause them anxiety the most, 'three common types of situation' were agreed on by all of the participants. These include 'when they have to give a presentation on a project they have been working on' (test-anxiety), 'when they have to speak in front of the class or being the centre of everyone's attention especially without preparation' (fear of negative evaluation), and 'when they have to repeat themselves or when the listeners could not understand them' (communication apprehension).

"I felt like my life was on the line when I was presenting my project and the audience just seemed so bored". (P4)

"I don't like it whenever I speak and then all eyes are fixed on me". (P1)

"I felt so humiliated when I was asked to repeat myself. I felt like I have done something wrong". (P3)

Several implications can be considered based on these combined results. First of all, considering that the participants in the research are studying in a university class and not in an English course especially in an English-speaking country, they are all expected to already be able to communicate well in English. This means that when they speak, they may be perceived as an English user and not as an English learner which means that the impact of being evaluated may be greater. As for the anxiety classified by dimensions, it is believed that the reason why test-anxiety (TA) is the most experienced area among the participants comes from the fact that this type of anxiety is directly associated with the students' own performance in their university programs. For example, when they are required to give a presentation for their assignments or oral examinations which would be graded by their university instructors as indicated by the participants from the interviews. Based on Akkakoson's (2016) criteria, the participants achieve the mean score of 3.58 on this dimension which considers a high level of anxiety which aligns with Koch and Terrell's (1991, as cited in Aydin, 2014) who suggested that making oral presentation is considered to be the most anxiety provoking activity. Moreover, these results appeared to be in line with Chinpakdee's (2015) findings that Thai students tend to become most anxious when 'academic evaluation' or a type of situation that they would be graded based on how well they did with their English language performance is involved. Thus, it can be inferred that when it comes to their English-speaking performance, Thai postgraduate students in UK universities might be more concerned about its impact on their academic achievement more than other aspects.

Communication apprehension (CA) is found to be the second most dominant source of anxiety among the participants with the mean score of 3.38 which is considered a medium-anxiety level. A plausible explanation for this is proposed by Woodrow (2006) who suggested that when students are living in the target language environment, they have to

communicate in English not just in the classroom but also in daily life which is why communication apprehension is another great concern for them. As the participants are studying in the UK, this also applied to them. Fear of negative evaluation (FNE), though, despite being the least experienced area compared with the other two dimensions, achieves the mean score of 3.34 which is also considered a medium-anxiety level. There are myriad studies which identify fear of negative evaluation as one of the major sources of foreign language anxiety (Akkakoson, 2016; Mak, 2011; Palaleo and Srikrajang, 2018; Sadighi and Dastpak, 2017; Zhiping and Paramasivam, 2013). These studies, however, were conducted differently among both Thai and non-Thai students as well as domestic and international students. Therefore, it could be inferred that fear of negative evaluation may be a common source of anxiety that is experienced by every type of student despite their differences in the context of their study.

4.2 Attitudes of Thai postgraduate students in UK universities

The second research question aims to discover the participants' attitudes towards their own English-speaking performance and native speakers of English. Items number 1 and 12 from the questionnaire which are related to asking participants about their attitudes on their English-speaking performance and item number 10 and 15 which are associated with asking about their attitudes when they have to converse with native speakers of English were calculated and used to answer this research question. During the interviews, the participants were also asked to share their opinions on these matters in which their statements were used as part of the analysis.

Table 2. Participants' attitudes towards English speaking and native speakers (N = 58)

Participants' attitudes	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I'm speaking English in class at my university.	**31.03%** **(18)**	**36.21%** **(21)**	18.97% (11)	8.62% (5)	5.17% (3)
2. I feel confident when I speak English in class at my university.	5.17% (3)	12.07% (7)	**37.93%** **(22)**	**31.03%** **(18)**	13.79% (8)
3. I would be nervous when conversing in English with my classmates or instructors who are native speakers of English.	8.62% (5)	**29.31%** **(17)**	22.41% (13)	**27.59%** **(16)**	12.07% (7)
4. I would not probably feel comfortable around classmates or instructors who are native speakers of English.	13.79% (8)	17.24% (10)	**24.14%** **(14)**	20.69% (12)	**24.14%** **(14)**

*SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree

The results from the questionnaire for this research question are shown in table 2. As for the first item, "I never feel quite sure when I'm speaking English in class at my university", most participants appeared to strongly agree (31.03%) or agree (36.21%) which indicates a level of uncertainty with their English-speaking performance. This aligns with the responses from the second item in which when asked whether they feel confident when they speak English in class at their university, 31.03% of the participants disagree with the statement. However, interestingly, 37.93% of the participants chose to provide response with 'neutral' or when they neither agree nor disagree with the statement which indicates that there might be times when they feel confident to speak English and the other times when they do not. This suggests that more details on this matter are needed. As a result, data from the interviews were used for further analysis.

The findings from the interviews appeared to be in line with the results from the questionnaire in which it was found that 4 out of 4 of the participants expressed negative attitudes towards their own English-speaking performance. Most of them claimed that they often struggle with pronunciations and find it hard to maintain a long conversation when conversing with others in English. They pointed out that they normally have to repeat themselves at least twice or more during a conversation as their listeners could not understand them since the first time which is due to their mispronunciations of some particular words. Moreover, 3 out of 4 of the participants reported that they often feel inferior when comparing their English-speaking ability with their peers'.

"Sometimes, I have to repeat the same words twice or even thrice to make the listeners understand what I mean. It's really demotivating.". (P3)

"I always feel like my classmates are better at speaking English than me. Like, we are all Asians, but they are so much better than me". (P2)

Additionally, when they were asked to share their thoughts on 'English-accents', 2 out of 4 of the participants stated that they 'dislike' their own Thai-English accent as it seems 'displeasing' and is often frowned upon by others especially the native speakers and that they wish they could acquire a more native-like accents such as British or American. The other 2 out of 4 of the participants though, despite asserting that 'there is nothing wrong with having Thai-English accent' and that 'intelligibility' is much more important, still claimed that having a native-like accent could, nonetheless, increases their 'credibility' especially when using the English language for communication in workplace.

"Some of the people I met wouldn't even let you finish talking if you are speaking in a heavy Thai-English accent". (P2)

"My classmate was speaking in her British accent and everyone was in awe of her speech". (P1)

Furthermore, as for the type of situation that they would be confident enough to speak English, 4 out of 4 of the participants agreed that they are most comfortable when they have time to prepare themselves and that they dislike 'spontaneous speaking' which supports

Palaleo and Srikrajang's (2018) claim that having to speak without preparation can cause Thai students to become anxious.

"Most of the time, I wouldn't even know what to say if I didn't have time to prepare myself".
(P3)

"My instructor asked me a question and my mind just went blank". (P2)

These findings indicate that Thai postgraduate students in UK universities tend to have 'negative' attitudes towards their own speaking performance. This result, however, appeared to contradict Akkakoson's (2016) finding that Thai students studying in an English course at a Thai university reported having 'positive' attitudes towards their own English-speaking skills. It could be assumed that this might be due to the fact that the participants in this research are studying in a university course and not in an English course and also in an English-speaking country and not in Thailand which may lead to an increased awareness over their English-speaking performance and their speaking mistakes as the context in which they use English for communication is not considered a 'safe space' for them as in an English language classroom. Additionally, as they are living in the target environment, they might have to communicate with other classmates who are native speakers or those with higher English language proficiency which may cause them to have an unrealistic expectation and make a comparison between their English-speaking performance and others which might lead to their lower confidence in their English-speaking skills.

In terms of their attitudes towards native English speakers, the results from questions 3 and 4 appeared to be contradictory. As for the responses for the third item, "I would be nervous when conversing in English with my classmates or instructors who are native speakers of English", 29.31% of the participants agree with the statement while, equally, 27.59% of them disagree. The responses for the fourth item, "I would not probably feel comfortable around classmates or instructors who are native speakers of English", also appeared to be comparatively equal in every choice with the answers on 'neutral' (24.14%) and 'strongly disagree' (24.14%) being slightly higher than the others. The participants' responses on 'neutral' choice indicates their uncertainty which could be due to the fact that they might have both positive (feeling comfortable) and negative (feeling uncomfortable) experiences

with different English native speakers which is why they are unable to come to a solid conclusion.

Similarly, the results from the interviews also appeared to be varied in which 2 out of 4 of the participants stated that they feel more comfortable conversing in English with native speakers as they find most non-native speakers especially fellow Thai people more critical of their English-speaking performance particularly their English accent and pronunciations. They added that this never happens to them when they communicate with native speakers.

"I find lots of native speakers more open-minded when it comes to English accents. As long as we can understand each other, the way you speak does not concern them". (P4)

"I felt like being judged by my Thai friends all the time whenever I speak English". (P1)

The other 2 out of 4 of the participants, on the contrary, claimed that a lot of native speakers that they met were not willing to listen to them and showed signs of irritation when they spoke too slowly or unclear unlike most non-native speakers that they talked with who appeared to be more supportive and patient to them.

"They (native speakers) seemed so bored when I spoke too slowly or stammering. Some of them were also frowning at me the whole time while I was speaking". (P3)

"Even though I made a lot of mistakes and kept talking in circle, they (non-native speakers) were very patient and understanding". (P2)

Thus, regarding their attitudes towards native speakers, it can be concluded that there is a high level of diversity among Thai postgraduate students in UK universities when it comes to their experiences with native English speakers in which while some of them have no trouble or even prefer to converse with native speakers of English, others might find it difficult to do so. This may be due to the differences in the participants' educational background (high school – undergraduate programs) and experiences of living aboard or exposure to native speakers. For instance, while some of them might have graduated from an international program where conversing with native speakers is considered normal prior to their study in

the UK, others might come from a Thai program where having opportunities to communicate with native speakers is limited which might affect their attitudes towards native speakers.

4.3 The impact of speaking anxiety on Thai postgraduate students in UK universities

The last research question intends to find out in what ways does speaking anxiety affect the participants. This was done by calculating Items 5, 6, 8, 13 which are all related to describing reactions or physical symptoms which occurred from speaking anxiety. Other types of cognitive and physical reactions which arise during the interview from the anxiety were also reported.

Table 3. Impact of speaking anxiety on participants' physical wellbeing (N = 58)

Impact of speaking anxiety	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in class at my university.	20.69% (12)	**41.38%** **(24)**	17.24% (10)	13.79% (8)	6.90% (4)
2. I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in class at my university.	29.31% (17)	**36.21%** **(21)**	17.24% (10)	8.62% (5)	8.62% (5)
3. In class at my university, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	12.07% (7)	**36.21%** **(21)**	24.14% (14)	13.79% (8)	13.79% (8)
4. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my class.	**37.93%** **(22)**	**37.93%** **(22)**	8.62% (5)	15.52% (9)	0.00% (0)

*SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree

The results for this research question are shown in table 3. Surprisingly, the vast majority of participants appeared to mostly respond with either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with every item indicating that these physical reactions or symptoms do normally occur to them when they experience speaking anxiety. For the first item "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in class at my university", 41.38% of the participants agree with this statement which indicates that speaking anxiety does interfere with their English-speaking performance by causing them to become nervous and confused.

For the second item, "I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in class at my university", 36.21% of the participants agree and 29.31% strongly agree with the statement. This suggests that having time to prepare before speaking English in class is important to them. It could also be inferred that most Thai postgraduate students in UK universities would generally refuse to participate in group discussions or to volunteer answers in classes if they are unsure or not ready to do so. Thus, when being asked spontaneous questions, most of them might choose to remain silent rather than embarrassing themselves by answering the questions awkwardly. This aligns with Ambele and Boonsuk's (2018) finding which found that many Thai university students commonly use 'silence' as a communicative face-saving act in face-to-face spontaneous interaction when they are unsure of themselves. For the third item, "In class at my university, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know", 36.21% of participants agree with this statement indicating that speaking anxiety could affect the flow of their speech during their interactions with others as it causes them to forget the things that they are about to say.

For the last item, "I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my class", the responses appeared to be fairly obvious in which 37.93% strongly agree, and another 37.93% of the participants agree with the statement. Moreover, not a single participant strongly disagrees with the question. This indicates that 'heart racing' is a common physical symptom in response to speaking anxiety among Thai postgraduate students in UK universities.

During the interviews, when the participants were asked about the effects of speaking anxiety on their well-being, 2 out of 4 of the participants stated that it causes them to keep repeating the same words or stammering and talking in circle while speaking as they keep forgetting

what to say next. This aligns with Suleimenova's (2013) claim that the anxiety can disrupt individuals' retrieval of information which in turns impede the flow of their speech.

"When I didn't know what else to say, I kept repeating on the last words I said". (P1)

"I keep saying the same things over and over when I get nervous. It's kind of embarrassing (laugh)". (P2)

The other 2 out of 4 of the participants appeared to experience higher level of speaking anxiety compared with the previous participants in which they asserted that when they experience the anxiety, they tend to 'freeze up' or 'be in complete silent' for fear that if they keep talking, they would humiliate themselves, which parallels with the result for the third item in the questionnaire.

"I freeze up when I lack of words to say". (P4)

"If I didn't know what to say I would just immediately become quiet. I am scared that if I continued to speak, I would embarrass myself even more". (P3)

As a consequence, it appeared that speaking anxiety could adversely affect Thai postgraduate students in UK universities' cognitive and physical wellbeing in different ways including causing them to 'become nervous and confused', 'forget what they are about to say or stammer while speaking', 'freeze up or withdraw themselves from a conversation', and 'experience heart palpitations'. These symptoms could therefore lower their English-speaking performance and may interfere with their learning in classes at their university such as causing them to have difficulty participating in group discussion and exchanging ideas with their classmates as well as lower their fluency when they are giving a speech or a presentation in class.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Purpose of the study and main findings

This study investigated foreign language anxiety or speaking anxiety among Thai postgraduate students in UK universities. FLCAS questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed to identify students' general speaking anxiety level, their attitudes towards their own English-speaking performance and native speakers, and the impact of the anxiety on their cognitive and physical wellbeing which might adversely affect their quality of learning at their universities.

In terms of the general speaking anxiety level, it was found that the vast majority of the students appeared to experience medium-anxiety level. Additionally, when the speaking anxiety level is classified by dimensions, it appeared that the participants experience high-anxiety level on test-anxiety (TA), medium-anxiety level on communication apprehension (CA), and medium-anxiety level on fear of negative evaluation (FE). Furthermore, three most common anxiety-inducing situations among the students based on these dimensions have been identified including 'giving a presentation of an assignment or a project that would be graded by the instructors', 'delivering a speech or talking in front of the class particularly without preparation', and 'not being understood by others or having to repeat themselves'.

In terms of the participants' attitudes, data from both the questionnaire and the interviews indicate that most Thai postgraduate students in UK universities appeared to have 'negative attitudes' towards their own English-speaking performance in which it is believed that this is due to the fact that being international students, they are living in the target environment and have to use English as a medium of communication both in classes and in daily lives which may cause them to become more aware of their performance and mistakes especially when comparing themselves to others. However, as for their attitudes towards native speakers, the findings appeared to have mixed results which indicate that there is a high level of diversity among the students in terms of their experiences with native speakers. It is believed that this is because of the differences in participants' educational background, experiences living aboard and exposure to foreigners which may influence their perceptions of native speakers.

As for the impact of the speaking anxiety, it was found that the anxiety appeared to have direct debilitating effects on students' cognitive and physical wellbeing. Both data from the questionnaire and the interviews indicate that the most common reaction of the participants when experiencing the anxiety is 'to forget things that they know or are about to say during a conversation' which causes them to stammer or keep repeating the same words as they are unable to maintain and continue with their speech. This suggests that the anxiety could interfere with the students' speaking ability as well as lower their speaking performance which in turn could adversely affect their learning experiences at their university classes. This is because as international students, they are required to use English as medium of communication to participate in group discussions and activities throughout their courses in which having difficulty with English speaking could therefore lower their confidence and engagement over the lessons which in turns decrease their learning quality. Another common reaction which was reported by the participants when they experience speaking anxiety is to freeze up and to be in complete silent for fear that if they continue to speak, they would embarrass themselves. Other commonly found symptoms include 'becoming confused and nervous', 'panic when having to speak without preparation', and 'heart palpitation'.

5.2 Pedagogical implications of the study

The results of the study indicate that speaking anxiety is an issue that is not only commonly found in a foreign language classroom learning context but also among international students studying in a content university classroom that requires the use of English as a medium of communication. It was revealed that most Thai postgraduate students in UK universities appeared to be critical of their English-speaking performance especially when they have to deliver a speech or give a presentation that would be evaluated by their instructors. Moreover, they are mostly concerned with not being understood by others and prefer to have time to prepare themselves before speaking rather than engaging in spontaneous interactions. Furthermore, they are most comfortable when talking with those who are patient and willing to listen to them despite their stammering or being momentarily at a loss of words. Thus, it is believed that strategies employed by lecturers as suggested by Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) might be effective in helping to reduce their anxiety. For example, not calling students' name and let them volunteer their answers willingly as this would allow them to have time to prepare themselves before answering and appreciating their answers or their

effort as well as showing positive gestures such as making eye contact which would help them become more relaxed and comfortable to speak.

Additionally, as the results have shown that several Thai postgraduate students in UK universities may employ the use of 'silence' as one of their communicative strategies during a conversation when they are uncertain of their language proficiency which align with Ambele and Boonsuk's (2018) claim, lecturers might mistakenly perceive this type of behaviour as 'rudeness' rather than an indicator for their uncertainty. Therefore, it is hoped that these findings would help create a better understanding of Thai postgraduate students in UK universities' speaking behaviour in class.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for further researches

There are certain limitations in this present research. First of all, as the participants had equal chance to participate in this study, they were not selected based on their English language proficiency level especially in terms of their English-speaking performance in which while some students entered the program on the basis of having IELTS as a proof of their adequate English language proficiency, others may be admitted to their tertiary programs after they have completed the English pre-sessional course as required by the institutions. This means that whether there is a relationship between the participants' English language proficiency level and speaking anxiety, and whether university English pre-sessional course could effectively prepare the students in terms of their English language speaking adjustment are yet to be explored for certain. Secondly, the findings of this research were not classified based on the students' gender which may possibly be one of the factors that might play an important role in how speaking anxiety might affect them differently. Thus, it is recommended that this should be taken into consideration for future researches such as recruiting the number of male and female participants equally. Lastly, it is believed that larger samples for both quantitative and qualitative data are advisable in order to draw a more significant result.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)
*Approximate time for completing the questionnaire: 15 minutes

1.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English in class at my university.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	I worry about making English speaking mistakes in class at my university.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	It frightens me when I don't understand what the instructors is saying in English.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	I keep thinking that the other students at my university is better at speaking English than I am.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in class at my university.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in class at my university.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	I worry about not being able to answer the questions that my instructors ask because of my limited English-speaking skills.	5	4	3	2	1

8.	In class at my university, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my class.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	I would be nervous when speaking English with my classmates or instructors who are native speakers of English.	5	4	3	2	1
11.	Even if I am well prepared, I still feel anxious about speaking English in class at my university.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	I feel confident when I speak English in class at my university.	5	4	3	2	1
13.	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my class.	5	4	3	2	1
14.	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the instructors are saying in my class.	5	4	3	2	1
15.	I would probably not feel comfortable around my classmates or instructors who are native speakers of English.	5	4	3	2	1
16.	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students at my university.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	I am usually not at ease during oral examinations or when I give a presentation in class at my university.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule
*Time for conducting the interview: 15 – 30 minutes

Focus area	Examples of questions
To get to know the participants	1. Where are you currently studying in the UK? 2. What is your major? 3. Have you had any experience living abroad before? 4. How confident are you with English language? 5. Would you rate yourself as a good English speaker?
To identify participants' speaking anxiety level To determine the types of situations that cause them anxiety the most	1. On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your speaking anxiety level? 2. When do you often get nervous when it comes to speaking English? (e.g. giving a presentation, sharing opinions with the class, having a group discussion, talking to native speakers). 3. How do you feel when you have to speak in front of the class? 4. How do you feel when you have to give a presentation?

To explore participants' attitudes towards their own English-speaking performance and native speakers	1. How do you feel about your English accent? Do you believe that it affects your intelligibility and confidence to speak English? 2. Are you satisfied with your current English-speaking performance? In what areas that you wish to improve? 3. How do you feel when you have to converse with native speakers? 4. How do you feel when you have to converse with other Asian classmates?
To find out about the impact of speaking anxiety	1. What would normally occur when you get nervous when you have to/ while you are speaking English? 2. How does speaking anxiety affect you and in what ways? 3. How does speaking anxiety affect your learning at your university?

Appendix 3: Plain Language Statement

Plain Language Statement

Title of project and researcher details

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety among Thai postgraduate students in UK universities

Researcher: Kittipong Phormphithak (2426401)

Supervisor: Sofia Di Giallonardo

Course: MSc TESOL

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information on this page carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. I hope that this sheet will answer any questions you have about the study. Thank you for reading this.

Please note that 'anxiety' in this context doesn't refer to a medical condition, but rather the feelings of nervousness when learning or using a second language.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to find out the effects and the causes of foreign language classroom anxiety among Thai postgraduate students in UK universities

2. Why have I been chosen?

You are being asked to take part because you are a postgraduate student currently studying in a UK university.

3. Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study. If you decide not to take part, you are still free to withdraw for any reason. If after you have started to take part, you change your mind, just let me know and I will not use any information you have given me in my writing.

4. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decided to take part, I will ask you to complete the questionnaire about how using English in your university classes affects your levels of anxiety.

After the filling in the questionnaire, if you would like to participate in a follow-up interview, you can leave your email details so that I can contact you. I will arrange a time to interview you. I will ask you some questions about the impact of the anxiety on your learning, the causes of the anxiety, and how do you cope with it.

You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to. This will take about 30 minutes. The interview will take place on Zoom. You may choose to turn on/off the camera throughout the interview. I will record your answers as an audio file so that I can listen carefully to what you said. However, if during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that you might be uncomfortable, I will stop the interview immediately.

5. Will the information that I give you in this study be kept confidential?

I will keep all the data I collect about you in a locked file on my computer. When I write about what I have found, your name will not be mentioned. You may choose a pseudonym which I will use when writing up the final assignment. However, please note that confidentiality may not be guaranteed in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to participants and others, and due to the size of the participant sample.

6. What will happen to the results of this study

I will analyse the data I collect from participants, and present this in the dissertation which I am writing for my qualification, MSc TESOL. I will destroy all the research data including any personal information that I gather at the end of the project (December, 2022).

7. Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education Ethics Forum, University of Glasgow

8. Who can I contact for further Information?

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask me, Kittipong Phormphithak (2426401p@student.gla.ac.uk)

or my supervisor, Sofia Di Giallonardo (sofia.digiallonardo@glasgow.ac.uk)

or the Ethics officer for the School of Education, Paul.Lynch@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this.

End _____

Appendix 4: Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Project: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety among Thai postgraduate student in UK universities

Name of Researcher: Kittipong Phormphithak (2426401)

Please tick as appropriate

Yes ☐ No ☐   I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Yes ☐ No ☐   I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐   I consent to interviews being audio-recorded and stored.

Yes ☐ No ☐   I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

Yes ☐ No ☐   I accept that confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to participants or others.

Yes ☐ No ☐   I accept that confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee due to the size of sample.

I agree that:

Yes ☐ No ☐   All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

Yes ☐ No ☐   The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

Yes ☐ No ☐   The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Yes ☐ No ☐   The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research

Yes ☐ No ☐   The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

Yes ☐ No ☐   I waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

Yes ☐ No ☐   I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I agree to take part in this research study   ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study   ☐

Name of Participant

Signature   Date

Name of Researcher   Kittipong Phormphithak   Signature   กิตติ พรธ์

Date

……………… End of consent form ……………

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