


GENDER, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION
APPREHENSION IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM AMONG CHINESE COLLEGE
STUDENTS



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STUDENTS

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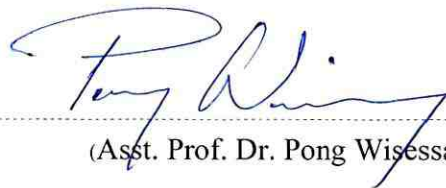
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ABSTRACT

As development of globalization more and more students learn English, English has been the most popular language in the world, and learning English has become an inevitable trend. However, anxiety and fear occur in the process of communicating in English, such anxiety and fear as communication apprehension. Communication apprehension has been a key factor to hinder English learning (Matsuoka, 2008). This study aimed to determine the differences of communication apprehension between different genders and the correlation between academic achievement and communication apprehension. A quantitative research was employed using the questionnaire as a tool to investigate 200 Chinese college students in English class from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies who were randomly selected. Results of T-test showed that there is no significant difference of communication apprehension between female and male students. Results of Pearson-Moment Correlation showed that there is a negative relationship between students' academic achievement and communication apprehension.

Keywords: Communication Apprehension, Gender, Academic Achievement.

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Finally yet importantly, I would like to dedicate this paper to my family, thank for my parents, and family's support.

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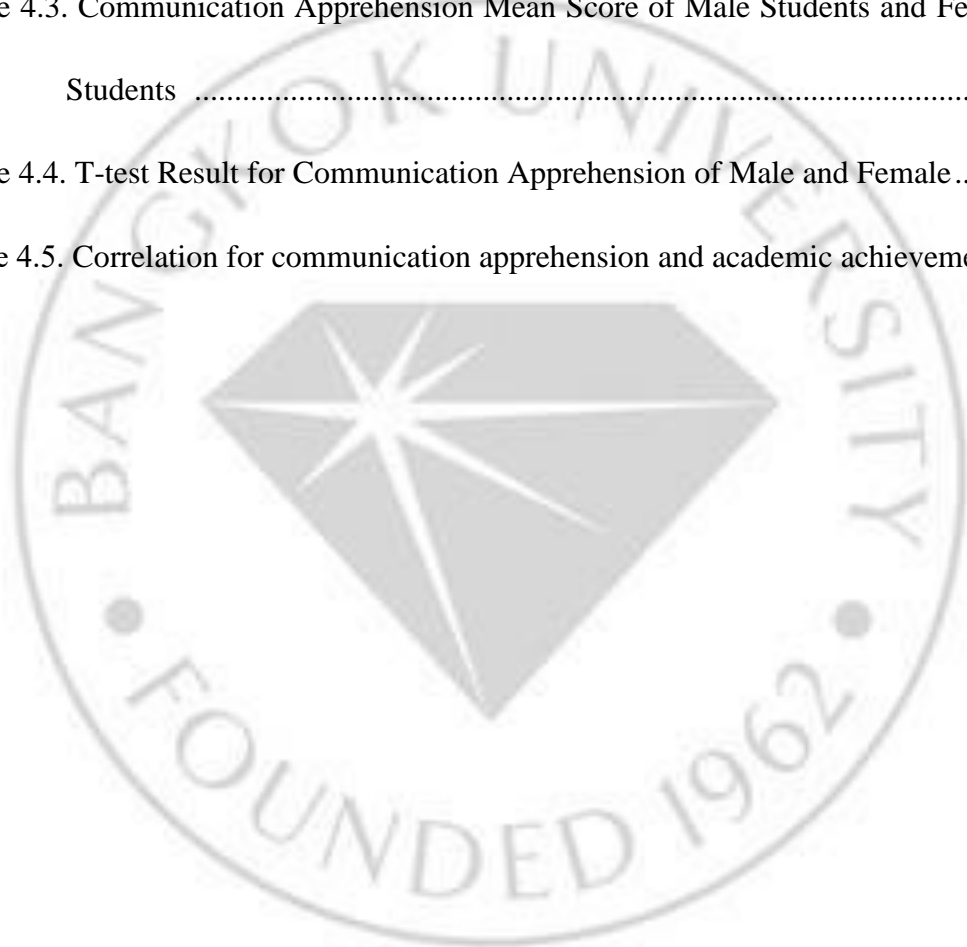
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CHAPTER1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale and Problem Statement

Since the world entered into the globalization era, English language has been the means of international communication (Galloway & Rose, 2018). Governments of almost all countries have paid importance to English competency of people in the countries. English class is mandatory for kids, pupils, and students to enroll. China is no exception, since the reform and opening up, in order to cultivate English talents, all of comprehensive universities set up English major and English class. Therefore, English class is compulsory for most Chinese college students, and it is regarded as a necessary ability for students to adapt to modern society (Fang, 2018).

In fact, English class is a process of communication between teachers and students, and communication is the means to improve efficiency of English study. Communication can make learning become easier, that students can easily understand what teachers said in class (Rubio, 2009), and teachers can also easily arouse students' enthusiasm by communicating. Until now in Chinese English class, most of communication is no longer initiated by the teacher but it is the interaction between the teacher and students.

However, a lot of Chinese students refuse to volunteer to participate in the

discussion in English class. Generally, they tend to keep silent and listening rather than speaking. In China, English learning requires not only writing and reading but also speaking. Since English is not the native language for Chinese students, such status generally causes pressure among Chinese students and leads to anxiety and fear (Peng & Muhamad Sham Bin, 2015). That is, the students might care more about what others think about them and concern about negative evaluation from others, and they might also lack of ability to accurately express themselves in foreign language which leads to frustration and fear (Russ, 2012), and that phenomenon is termed communication apprehension.

Communication apprehension is defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977b). McCroskey (1977b) found that the school would be reinforcing communication apprehension of students with high level of communication apprehension because the school demands silence most of the time. The students with high level of communication apprehension tend to conform to the requirement and will be reinforced for it. The same is also true regarding the situation of Chinese universities, which generally require students to keep quiet in class. Meanwhile, students with communication apprehension might rarely participate in class discussion and they tend to reduce teachers’ attention to them because they fear communicating with others. Hence, the classroom setting of China might foster

students' communication apprehension (Zhang, 2005). Besides, Chinese college students care more about what others think of them, so when they have to speak English in public, they might be afraid to make a fool of themselves and be laughed at, this status might cause their apprehension to be more serious (Yang, 2015).

Communication apprehension will have a negative effect on academic environment (McCroskey & Sheahan, 1978). That is, it has a powerful influence on students' learning, and the students with high level of communication apprehension are not able to study English well (Russ, 2012). Unfortunately, in China, most of university teachers care more about teaching task and academic results and hence unknowingly ignore students' communication apprehension (Zhang, 2005). Communication apprehension has been a key factor to hinder English learning (Matsuoka, 2008). Therefore, it is meaningful to explore communication apprehension and use findings as a reference for later research on student's communication apprehension in English class even foreign language class.

Different components of an individual have different effects on communication apprehension, such as gender and academic achievement. Gender and communication apprehension are two variables that have been investigated numerous times. There are studies suggesting that female students experience higher level of communication apprehension than male students (e.g. Frantz, Marlow & Wathen, 2014; Aly & Islam,

2005; Rafek, Ramli, Iksan, Harith & Abas, 2014; Faridizad & Simin, 2015). On the contrary, some studies revealed that male students experience higher level of communication apprehension than female students (e.g. Borzi & Mills, 2001; Dogan & Tuncer, 2016). Besides, some studies found that there are no significant gender differences relating to communication apprehension (e.g. Suzan, 2017; Oladipo, Agbajeola & Adenaike, 2012). However, there are not many studies exploring the levels of communication apprehension between male and female Chinese college students. In this study, I intend to investigate the levels of communication apprehension among male and female Chinese college students.

The other component of an individual might affect the level of communication apprehension is academic achievement, Butler, Pryor, and Marti (2004) found that students with higher GPA experience higher communication apprehension than students with poor academic achievement. However, Blume, Baldwin and Ryan (2013) presented that students with poor academic achievement experience higher communication apprehension compared with students with good academic achievement. This study will examine the effect of academic achievement on communication apprehension among Chinese students. Besides, although some studies examine the relationship between academic achievement and communication apprehension, there is the lack of research on Chinese students. Chinese students care more about their academic achievement, and they think that academic achievement is

the symbol of success and tend to compare the achievement among one another, so academic achievement might influence their psychology (e.g. depression, anxiety) (Zhang, 2005).

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the purpose, two research questions were investigated in the study:

1. Is there a difference in the level of communication apprehension between male and female Chinese college students?
2. What is the relationship between academic achievement and communication apprehension among Chinese college students?

1.3 Objectives

This study investigated the difference of male and female Chinese students regarding their communication apprehension and the relationship between their academic achievement and communication apprehension in English class. This study wants to fulfill two objectives: 1) to verify whether Chinese college students with different genders have different communication apprehension levels, and 2) to explore the relationship between communication apprehension and academic achievement, whether it is a positive or negative or non relationship, and whether students with high course marks experience lower communication apprehension level or vice versa.

1.4 Scope of Study

The study focused on communication apprehension levels of different genders and academic achievements among Chinese college students. It was conducted to determine the communication apprehension between different genders and the correlation between academic achievement and communication apprehension in the Chinese university as perceived by students in English class.

1.5 Definition of Terms

The definitions of terms used in the study are provided as following:

Communication Apprehension: it defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977b). In this study, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used to measure students’ communication apprehension.

Academic Achievement: it refers to “the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals” (Rowe, Vazsonyi & Flannery, 1995). The grade of English class was used as representations of their levels of academic achievement in this study.

College Students: it refers to the learners who attend to a university (Weinstein, 2010), in this present study, college students refer to the students who studying in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in China.

English class: it refers to the class for learners to learn English (Cristina-Loredana, 2011), in this study, English class refers to Oral English class.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept Theories of Communication Apprehension

McCroskey (1977b) defined communication apprehension (CA) as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.” McCroskey (1987) also stated that “communication apprehension exists as a trait-like predisposition toward communication and as a state-like response to given communication situations.” Osman, Nayan, Mansor, Maesin, and Shafie (2010) also presented that situational setting (e.g., public speaking) and individual’s personality traits (e.g., quietness, reticence and shyness) were possible causes of communication apprehension, while Spielberger (1966) stated “trait apprehension is characterized by fear or anxiety related to many different types of oral communication encounters, state apprehension specific to a given oral communication situation.”

Bruskin Associates (1973) found that state communication apprehension most people experience is a normal response when they communicate in a public setting. State CA is a normal response to a threatening situation, for example, when people have to interact with their boss or interview with important person, they will experience high state CA (McCroskey, 1977b). However, trait CA is not normal for

people. People with high trait CA will experience high levels of apprehension in almost all communication situations, both threatening and common communication setting (McCroskey, 1970).

The basic sign of communication apprehension is avoidance, since high communication apprehension individuals prefer to avoid talking with others and induce communication. Such people rarely talk to others rather than falling into silence or only talk when needed. McCroskey (1987) stated that individuals with high communication apprehension reduce contact with others as much as they can because communication may cause their discomfort. The other sign of communication apprehension is communication disruption, such people may be unnatural and faltering when they speaking in public (McCroskey, 1981), especially when they encounter the situation run afoul of the routine, they will be more anxious and nervous.

People who experience high communication apprehension will cause a negative impact on their economic, academic, political and social life (McCroskey, 1977b). Phillips (1965) also stated the apprehension has a negative impact on people's communication behavior as well as on their important aspects of their lives. Wright (2000) found that people with high communication apprehension are not willing to communicate with others, they prefer to live in their own comfort zone. And Pitt &

Ramaseshan (1989) stated that people with high communication apprehension can hardly interact well with others, meanwhile, the others cannot understand their meanings. Croucher (2013) found that people with high level of communication apprehension prefer to avoid initiating interaction, but this state makes their communication competence become worse, and poor communication competence leads to higher communication apprehension, which forms the vicious circle. Russ (2012) presented that people with high communication apprehension are likely to be inefficient in the work, because high communication apprehension might affect learning preferences and interaction with others.

For students, communication apprehension plays an important role in determining their ability to adapt to the environment and achieve the goal, and the students who experience lower communication apprehension are more quickly to adapt to new learning environment (Rafek, Ramli, Iksan, Harith, & Abas, 2014). Meanwhile, communication apprehension may hinder the development of students' communication skills and cause poor performance (Hassall, Joyce, & Gonzalez, 2013). Besides, the effects of communication apprehension are not limited to performance and problems encountered in class, but can affect the entire learning process (Sinnasamy & Karim, 2014). The students with high communication apprehension regard instructors as threat, and they try to avoid communication with instructors and stay away from them (Suzan, 2017). In the classroom, even if the students with high

communication apprehension cannot understand what the instructor said, they will not ask the instructor (Connell & Borden, 1987). Moreover, the students who experience high communication apprehension cannot accurately and efficiently receive information from teachers (Matsuoka, 2008), and there might be not readily available information on class delivered to the students with high communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1978). Blume, Baldwin, and Ryan (2013) stated that communication apprehension can hinder the students to achieve their full potential and the students with high communication apprehension may still choose to opt out of experiences even though they can.

There are various factors that can affect the levels of communication apprehension, the first is socio-economic status. Akram and Ghani (2013) found that the students from the lower socio-economic status experienced higher communication apprehension in class than others from the higher status, because higher-status students are more ambitious and their parents give them more encouragement (Gayton, 2013). But the students from lower socio-economic status may bear more stress (Gayton, 2013). Besides, some external factors can also affect the levels of communication apprehension, such as socio-culture and study environment. Matsuoka (2008) suggested that East-Asian collectivistic orientation and face-protecting orientation may make them harbor high levels of communication apprehension, because East Asians are sensitive to judgment by others and care more about what are

others thinking. On the other hands, in most of Asian countries especially in China, students face the pressure that English is a major subject in school, and there are few opportunities to practice English especially in the classroom (Yu, 2008). Moreover, students are required to enroll in English classes where speaking activity is crucial and speaking should be projected immediately (Rafek, Ramli, Iksan, Harith, & Abas, 2014). These situations may promote communication apprehension of students. Atasheneh and Izadi (2012) found that the more friendly and comfortable classroom environment, the less it is likely to cause communication apprehension. That is, formal classroom might lead to stress and anxiety to students because of its higher requirement and serious atmosphere.

2.2 Factors Contributing to Communication Apprehension

The two other factors that may affect levels of communication apprehension are gender and academic achievement. This study focuses on these two variables, and there have been some research on these two variables with communication apprehension. Rafek, Ramli, Iksan, Harith, and Abas (2014) found that female experience higher communication apprehension level than male students. Faridizad and Simin (2015) also proved female experience more communication apprehension than male, and they found significant differences between males and females with respect to communication apprehension. That is, female is more apprehensive than male, and female is unwilling or afraid to participate in class discussion. Because

female students prefer to maintain their faces for fear of losing their face in front of male, they tend to be comfortable when others admire them; meanwhile, they may feel anxiety when others laugh at them (Tran, Moni, & Baldauf, 2012).

In a classroom context, teachers tend to have more expectation of female students that leads to girls caring more about the quality of their work and performance in class. If their behaviors are not rewarded, they may feel frustrated and unmotivated (Piechurska-Kuciel , 2012). Frantz, Marlow, and Wathen (2014) stated that females prefer to compare themselves to other women, and they tend to improve themselves constantly and pursue perfection according to social standards, if they feel they are not up to standards which may lead to communication apprehension.

On the contrary, Kazu Kitano (2001) found male students tend to be more anxious than female students in foreign language class, and they are more apprehensive when they think they are less competent. Dogan and Tuncer (2016) also showed that communication apprehension level of male students is higher than female students in language class.

However, according to Suzan (2017), there are no gender differences relating to communication apprehension, although many students experience different levels of communication apprehension that originated from instructors in class. Oladipo,

Agbajeola, and Adenaike (2012) also found that gender is not a significant factor in communication apprehension.

Butler, Pryor, and Marti (2004) found that students with higher academic achievement experience higher communication apprehension, and they are very proud of and care more about their achievement and performance. However, Everett (1999) stated that communication apprehension is the problem that students should overcome in class but there is no relationship between communication apprehension and academic achievement. In this aspect, Blume, Baldwin, and Ryan (2013) found that students with poor academic performance experience higher communication apprehension compared with students with good academic performance, and the students with poor academic performance are less confident in their abilities so they may feel more anxious.

2.3 Hypotheses

For achieving the purpose of the study and facilitating the investigation of research questions, two hypotheses were proposed for the study.

H1: The students with different gender will have different levels of communication apprehension.

H2: There is a negative relationship between students' academic achievement and communication apprehension.

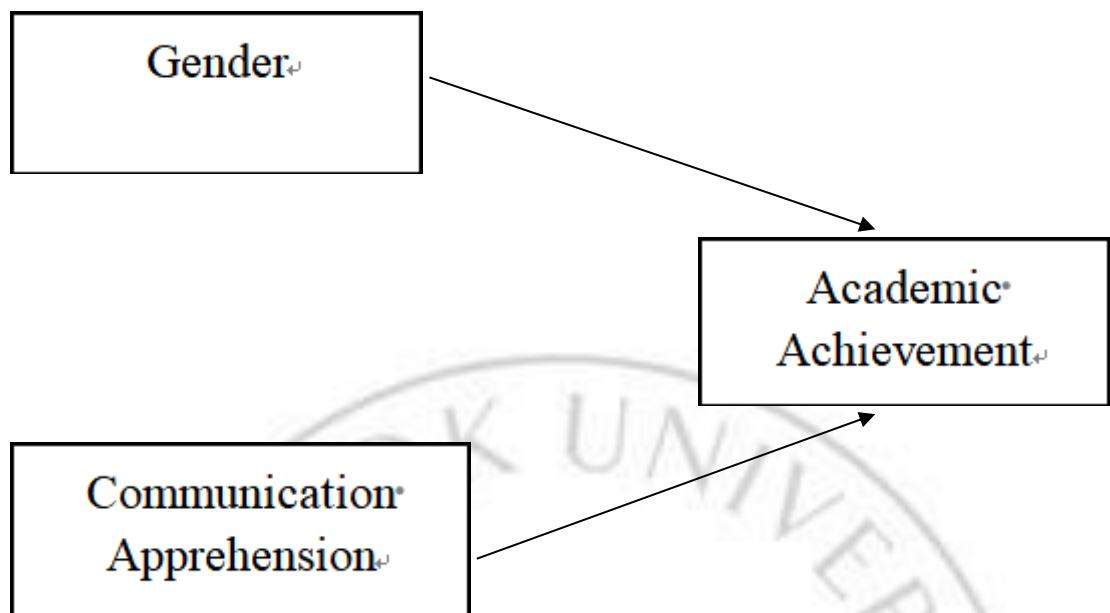


Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population and sample selection

This study intended to explore communication apprehension of Chinese college students, therefore, Chinese college students who enroll in English class as the study population. The researcher selected 200 Chinese students who are required to enroll in Oral English class in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. The stratified random sampling method was used to select samples with different gender, aging 18 to 25 years old from Colleges of English Language and International Business English in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. Besides, the respondents involved in this study are 122 female and 78 male students. They have a fundamental knowledge of English speaking as a result of English study from primary school and good grades of English in the college entrance examination. They are also interested in English and intend to improve their English, but it may still be difficult for them to communicate easily and fluently in English.

3.2 Instrument

This study utilized the quantitative approach and the instrument used to collect the data was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed according to the measurement of communication apprehension in foreign language classroom called

FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale), which consists of 33 questions about anxiety in foreign language class situations. FLCAS is the most frequently used instrument to assess students' communication apprehension in foreign language classroom (Horwitz & Cope, 1986). It is proved to be the most reliable measurement of anxiety in foreign language classroom (Rafek, Ramli, Iksan, Harith, & Abas, 2014). FLCAS can make students see how anxious when they are communicating in foreign language classroom, and provide a reference for managing their anxiety (Horwitz & Cope, 1986). The study selected 15 items out of 33 items that are related to CA, such as "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class." The instrument consists of the five Likert scales from strong disagree (1), disagree (2), neither disagree nor agree (3), agree (4) to strongly agree (5). Communication apprehension was divided into five levels: 1.00-1.80 (very low), 1.81-2.60 (low), 2.61-3.40 (moderate), 3.41-4.20 (high) and 4.21-5.00 (very high).

The questionnaire consists of questions asking about personal information, communication apprehension, and general opinion about English class. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and back translated into English in order to ensure congruency of meaning between the original English version and the translated Chinese version. The reliability of this instrument was calculated by Cronbach's alpha and found as high as .928 in Chinese version and .945 in English version.

3.3 Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed through email on May 7, 2018. Each respondent received an attachment including explaining of the study, incentives offered and survey questions. The first page explained in Chinese that the survey intend to learn about communication apprehension of students in Oral English class, and meanwhile explained what communication apprehension is. Besides, there was a note specifying that once the respondents finish the questionnaire and return it to the sender, they would have a chance to win a prize. The respondents were required to record their first impression and finish filling in the questionnaire as quickly as possible. And the respondents were required to return the questionnaire before May 9, 2018, and the results of the survey were returned to respondents after one week which in order to make them know their CA levels.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using an established statistical package, the descriptive statistics includes frequency, mean score, standard deviation were utilized to explain the characteristics of the sample students and their perceived CA levels. Independent Samples t-test was used to test hypothesis1 if there are significant differences in the level of communication apprehension between male and female, and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to test hypothesis2 if there is

any relationship between academic achievement and communication apprehension.



CHAPTER 4

FINDING

Most of the subjects were female (61%), the rest is male (39%). More than half of subjects were 20-24 years old (74%), followed by 19 years old (12.5%), 25 years old (8.5%), and 18 years old (5.0%), respectively. In the open-ended part, most of students suggested that the teacher should be more humorous in teaching (44%), many of students also suggested that the teacher should give more encouragement to students (33.5%). In addition, the students indicated that the teacher should improve communication with students (22.5%).

Table 4.1: Frequency & Percentage of Personal Data

	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
male	78	39
female	122	61
Total	200	100
Age		
18 years	10	5.0
19 years	25	12.5
20 years	30	15.0
21 years	42	21.0
22 years	27	13.5

(Continued)

Table 4.1(Continued): Frequency & Percentage of Personal Data

23 years	21	10.5
24 years	28	14.0
25 years	17	8.5
Total	200	100
Opinion		
The way of teaching should be more humorous	88	44.0
The instructor should appropriately encourage students	67	33.5
The instructor should improve communication with students	45	22.5
Total	200	100

The collected data were analyzed using an established statistical software. The descriptive statistics (frequency, valid percentage, mean score, standard deviation) are shown in Table4.2. The students reported a moderate CA in almost all aspects (mean=3.30-3.36), except that they should speak English without preparation (mean=2.58) and speak English with native speakers (mean=2.58). When students know that they are going to be called on in English class, they are more likely to possess the anxiety and fear to interfere with their communication, hence their level of communication apprehension was at the moderate degree (M=3.36).

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Communication Apprehension

	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strong agree	Total	Mean (SD)	Meaning
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	5 (2.5)	32 (16.0)	80 (40.0)	55 (27.5)	28 (14.0)	200 (100.0)	3.05 (1.39)	Moderate CA
I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English class.	11 (5.5)	55 (27.5)	68 (34.0)	46 (23.0)	20 (10.0)	200 (100.0)	3.36 (1.46)	Moderate CA
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English class.	9 (4.5)	43 (21.5)	58 (29.0)	70 (35.0)	20 (10.0)	200 (100.0)	3.15 (1.44)	Moderate CA
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	10 (5.0)	22 (11.0)	63 (31.5)	76 (38.0)	29 (14.5)	200 (100.0)	2.58 (1.07)	Low CA

(Continued)

Table 4.2(Continued): Descriptive Statistics for Communication Apprehension

It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	10 (5.0)	51 (25.5)	66 (33.0)	49 (24.5)	24 (12)	200 (100.0)	3.27 (1.48)	Moderate CA
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.	11 (5.5)	33 (16.5)	63 (31.5)	68 (34.0)	25 (12.5)	200 (100.0)	3.09 (1.46)	Moderate CA
I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	11 (5.5)	35 (17.5)	67 (33.5)	57 (28.5)	30 (15.0)	200 (100.0)	3.10 (1.49)	Moderate CA
I feel self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	10 (5.0)	48 (24.0)	62 (31.0)	59 (29.5)	21 (10.5)	200 (100.0)	3.23 (1.46)	Moderate CA
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.	17 (8.5)	34 (17.0)	67 (33.5)	63 (31.5)	19 (9.5)	200 (100.0)	3.23 (1.49)	Moderate CA

(Continued)

Table 4.2(Continued): Descriptive Statistics for Communication Apprehension

I get nervous when I don't understand every word the teacher says in English class.	13 (6.5)	56 (28.0)	48 (24.0)	62 (31.0)	21 (10.5)	200 (100.0)	3.29 (1.52)	Moderate CA
I worry about making mistakes when I'm speaking in English class.	17 (8.5)	29 (14.5)	51 (25.5)	68 (34.0)	35 (17.5)	200 (100.0)	3.03 (1.58)	Moderate CA
I can get so nervous I forget things I'm going to say in my English class.	11 (5.5)	39 (19.5)	69 (34.5)	58 (29.0)	23 (11.5)	200 (100.0)	3.19 (1.46)	Moderate CA
Even if I am well prepared for speaking, I feel nervous when I'm speaking in English class.	10 (5.0)	34 (17.0)	65 (32.5)	68 (34.0)	23 (11.5)	200 (100.0)	3.10 (1.44)	Moderate CA
I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	19 (9.5)	53 (26.5)	51 (25.5)	45 (22.5)	32 (16.0)	200 (100.0)	3.31 (1.63)	Moderate CA

(Continued)

Table 4.2(Continued):Descriptive Statistics for Communication Apprehension

I would be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	6 (3.0)	37 (18.5)	52 (26.0)	74 (37.0)	31 (15.5)	200 (100.0)	2.58 (1.07)	Low CA
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*Note: 1.00-1.08=very low CA, 1.81-2.60=low CA, 2.61-3.40=moderate CA 3.41-4.20=high CA, 4.21-5.00=very high CA.

Two variables have been studied with communication apprehension, these variables were gender and academic achievement. And each hypothesis were tested and explained separately below.

H1: The students with different gender will have different levels of communication apprehension.

To test hypothesis1, the researcher used Independent Samples t-test to test if there were any significant differences in the level of communication apprehension between male students and female students in English class. Table4.3. and Table4.4. revealed a non-significant difference between male and female samples regarding their level of communication apprehension ($t_{198} = .557, p > .05$). That is, both male students and female students experienced a moderate level of communication apprehension (mean_m = 3.33, SD= .963 vs. mean_f =3.25, SD= .992). Therefore, the hypothesis that students with different gender will have different levels of communication apprehension was not supported.

Table 4.3: Communication Apprehension Mean Score of Male Students and Female Students

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CA	male	78	3.33	.963	.109
	female	122	3.25	.992	.090

Table 4.4: T-test Result for Communication Apprehension of Male and Female

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
CA	Equal variances assumed	.141	.707	.557	198	.578	.079	.142	-.201	.360
	Equal variances not assumed			.561	167.865	.576	.079	.141	-.200	.358

H2: There is a negative relationship between students' academic achievement and communication apprehension.

To test hypothesis2, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was conducted to test the relationship between academic achievement and communication apprehension. According to Table4.5, a significant moderate and negative correlation was found between students' academic achievement and communication apprehension in English class ($r = -.585$, $p < .05$). That is, the students with higher academic achievement experienced lower communication apprehension level, and students with lower

academic achievement experienced higher communication apprehension level. So, hypothesis2 was supported.

Table4.5: Correlation for Communication Apprehension and Academic Achievement

		Grade	CA
Grade	Pearson Correlation	1	-.585**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
CA	Pearson Correlation	-.585**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Note: Grade of previous test of Oral English class presented students' academic achievement

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusion

The purposes of the study were to verify the correlation between academic achievement and communication apprehension and test the differences of communication apprehension between male and female. Two hypotheses were suggested in the study. Hypothesis 1 that students with different gender will have different levels of communication apprehension was not supported by the research data. The result of data analyzing reveals that both male and female Chinese students experience the moderate level of communication apprehension in English class. Hypothesis 2 that there is a negative relationship between students' academic achievement and communication apprehension was supported. The result of data analyzing proves that there is a negative and moderate relationship between academic achievement and communication apprehension, which means that the students with higher academic achievement experience lower communication apprehension and vice versa.

Even if communication apprehension of Chinese students in English class is not high, they experience moderate communication apprehension in general. But communication apprehension still exists in English class particularly in a foreign language class, and it is likely to hinder language learning. However, most teachers

and students are not aware of communication apprehension, since they do not even know what communication apprehension is, CA is frequently ignored in language classes. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to communication apprehension during language learning.

5.2 Discussion

This study reveals two findings from the data. Firstly, there is no significant difference of CA between male and female students. The result of this study supports the conclusion that there were no gender differences relating to communication apprehension (Kavanoz, 2017; Jaasma, 1997). Secondly, the study found that there is a negative relationship between academic achievement and communication

The major causes behind the moderate level of communication apprehension that Chinese students experience are cultural factors and social factors. Firstly, Zhang (2005) found that students' communication apprehension relates to power distance and instructors' humor orientation. If learning environment is of the high power distance and formal, the students will experience high communication apprehension and vice versa. Meanwhile, Dongmei and Xing (2012) stated that power distance of Chinese English teachers is lower than that of the non-English teachers. That is, compared to non-English teachers, English teachers tend to adopt informal methods of teaching and the classroom atmosphere is more relaxed. Besides, owing to specific

educational environment that learning English is compulsory from primary school for Chinese students, Chinese students may already adapt themselves to English class. Therefore, Chinese college students experience moderate level of communication apprehension. The levels of anxiety when speaking with native speakers and speaking without preparation in English class presented low communication apprehension level, that may be related to uncertainty avoidance of China. China is a country with low uncertainty avoidance, they prefer to accept new challenges, and they have good adaptability in the new environment. Therefore, when they speaking English with native speakers and speaking without preparation in English class, they may quickly adapt it and respond promptly.

Although there are not significant differences of CA between Chinese male and female students in English class, the level of academic achievement will influence their level of CA. To a certain extent, this situation is related to Chinese culture and value. Since China is a country with masculinity, they put more emphasis on success, and students' achievement is regarded as the standard of their success (Peng & Muhamad Sham Bin, 2015). Therefore, the students with lower academic achievement may feel more pressure compared with students with higher academic achievement, and such pressure may increase their anxiety. Besides, students with low academic achievement usually lack of confidence in their English which may lead to anxiety and fear in English class.

5.3 Limitation

Some limitations still existed in the present study. Firstly, apprehension survey measure (FLCAS) allowed for answering subjectively, so there might be some errors or inaccuracy while each respondent attempts to understand the items. Meanwhile, the questionnaire was only distributed one time, afterwards the researcher would not follow-up the survey. The participants might fudge their situation which affects the results of survey. Secondly, the present study selected samples from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, of which the learning environment might differ from other Chinese universities. Therefore, the result might not be applicable for the population of other universities. Finally, the present study just evaluated students' academic achievement according to the grade of one test, while the real academic achievement level of some students might not in accord with the grade of this test.

5.4 Recommendation

5.4.1 Recommendation for Related Agencies

It is a common situation that students experience communication apprehension in English class, and communication apprehension has been an important factor to hinder English learning. The instructors should care more about students' apprehension in English class, adopt accurate method of teaching, and should pay attention to asking skills and the way they ask question in English class. The instructor should also praise the students who perform well and give encouragement

to those whose performance are still below the acceptable level. On the other hand, the educational institution should organize interesting activities to improve English skills and develop cooperation among students. Edwards (2007) found that increasing the corporation between students which can reduce communication apprehension of students.

5.4.2 Recommendation for Future Research

There have been few researches on communication apprehension among Chinese students, because communication apprehension has not been paid much attention yet, a lot of people were hardly aware of communication apprehension. The future study can extend to explore the population to junior school and high school students and survey students in different educational levels. Besides, as popularity of learning other languages is also increasing, other research can investigate the communication apprehension of other languages as well.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire of Communication Apprehension of Chinese Students in English Class

Instruction: Objective of this survey is to collected data for use in Master of Communication Arts Research, Bangkok University. The result of this research will be benefit to language learning. In this regard, cooperation from the respondents are Needed. I, LiangYing, master's degree of communication arts student from Bangkok University thankfully for your cooperation Instruction: Please answer the following question and put \surd in \square that matches you most.

Part 1: Basic information

1. The gender of the student

\square 1) Male \square 2) Female

2. The age of the student

\square 1) 18 \square 2) 19

\square 3) 20 \square 4) 21

\square 5) 22 \square 6) 23

\square 7) 24 \square 8) 25

Part 2: Communication apprehension of the student in English class

	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strong Disagree
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.					
2. I tremble when I					

know that I am going to be called on in English class.					
3. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English class.					
4. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.					
5. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.					
6. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.					
7. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.					
8. I feel self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.					
9. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.					
10. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the teacher says in English class.					

11. I worry about making mistakes when I'm speaking in English class.					
12. I can get so nervous I forget things I'm going to say in my English class.					
13. Even if I am well prepared for speaking, I feel nervous when I'm speaking in English class.					
14. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English.					
15. I would be nervous speaking English with native speakers.					

BIODATA

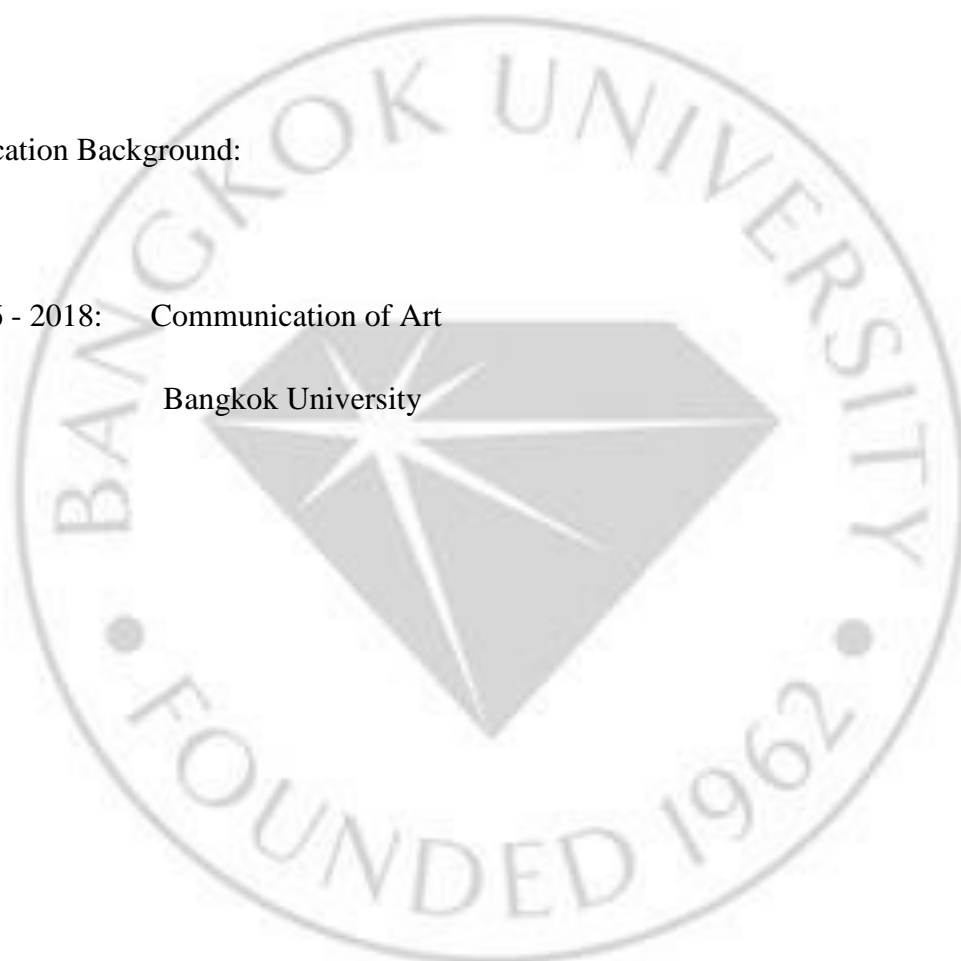
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