

## A Comparative Analysis of Public Speaking Anxiety Among Three Different Nationalities\*

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The purpose of this paper was to comparatively analyze public speaking anxiety (PSA) as observed in a Public Speaking (PS) course at an American university. A PSA survey was conducted, targeting 23 college students enrolled in a speech course. For the utilization of the PSA survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with five students of different nationalities who had excessive public-speaking anxiety. Also, descriptive statistics were done with the collected samples using SPSS 14.0 for PSA analysis. The results were as follows. First, on the PSA pre-test, participants felt more nervous, having a comparatively higher PSA level, reticence to speak in public, and experiencing pre-speech anxiety. As time went by, students felt less nervous. Especially, Chinese and Korean students felt more nervous before giving speeches, whereas American students felt more nervous when delivering the actual speech. Secondly, regardless of gender, Chinese and Korean students were more anxious than American students and focused more on linguistic and verbal communication skills, while American students tended to focus on non-verbal communication skills. Furthermore, in overcoming PSA, Chinese and Korean students memorized the content and looked at the front row, whereas American students utilized the key words and delivery outline, and made eye contact with each person in class. These findings demonstrate an imperative need to develop applicable strategies for PS in the EFL context.

[public speaking/public speaking anxiety/verbal and non-verbal communication/  
대중 말하기/대중 말하기 불안/언어적·비언어적 의사소통]

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In an era of public communication, the ability to inspirationally and persuasively impact audiences is an increasingly essential part of career development and a vital life skill. In the educational arena, both teachers and students encounter a number of challenges in public speaking such as meetings or conferences, interviews, presentations, congratulatory or celebratory speeches, and even in the business world. Whether students are talking in a team meeting or presenting in front of an audience, they oftentimes have to speak in public. However, public speaking (PS) causes much anxiety, and also demands a variety of required practices and processes (Beebe & Beebe, 2015).

Janusik and Wolvin (2009) reported that college students in the US spend 20% more time speaking, excluding listening (about 24%), than they do on any other communication activity, such as using the Internet (13%), writing (9%), or reading (8%). Ultimately, listening and speaking account for the largest part of communication. In the sense of dual tools of PS, PS activities also offer the audience a perfectly active listening arena to hone their listening skills where students are focused and purposefully acting both as active speakers and listeners. That is, focused, purposeful listening and speaking go hand-in-hand together on the basis of well-constructed interactions and reasoning. However, the challenge comes in that PS is often accompanied by some anxiety.

Regarding public speaking anxiety (PSA), with thorough preparation and practice, students can overcome their speaking apprehensions and perform exceptionally well. Moreover, good PS skills can help them advance their careers and create opportunities for a better life. Eventually, being a good public speaker can enhance our reputation, boost our self-confidence, and open up countless opportunities. However, good speaking skills require learners to make all-out efforts and take considerable time for practice (James, 2002; Lucas, 2009).

For PS skills, students need to establish some appropriate strategies to become better speakers from beginning to end. A speaker or presenter shows all aspects of his/her nonverbal cues such as appearance, impression, voice, tone and movement as well as verbal cues in an audience-friendly environment. Typically, public speeches accomplish one of three general purposes: to inform, persuade, or mark a special occasion.

In an academic sense, PS covers overall communication skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. In order to prepare for PS, students need to read relevant books, outline according to the audience the speech is aimed at, and pay more attention to listening when speakers give public speeches. Therefore, communication skills for both speakers and listeners are vital to our everyday lives. We use public speaking for a large portion of our daily activities; without it,

nobody gets very far in life when it comes to being a good communicator.

On the basis of the above notions, the researcher analytically observed “public speaking” courses at an American university introducing public speaking, emphasizing speaking with delivery issues, speech construction, and the communication process. Less research has been conducted on PS and has rarely been discussed in Korean English education. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate participants’ perceptions and responses to PSA, and to analyze the observation of a PS class focusing on the activities of five students of varying nationalities by investigating the following two research questions:

- 1) What are the levels and perceptions of students’ public speaking anxiety?
- 2) What are the public speaking characteristics of students from different nationalities?

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1. Definition and Characteristics of Public Speaking

The ability to speak confidently and convincingly in public is a great asset to anyone who wants to take an active role in the classroom, workplace, community or any position in society. In reality, one powerful vehicle for professional and personal growth is mastering the skills of PS. Then, what is PS? PS has a long and rich history starting with ancient Greeks and is a highly interactive yet holistic communicative process (Hemmert, 2008). It interacts with the source (or sender) as an encoder, the receiver (or audience) as a decoder, the message, the channel including noise as interference, and shared meaning, as well as context, goals, and outcomes in cultural, socio-psychological, temporal and physical contexts as shown in Figure 1 below.

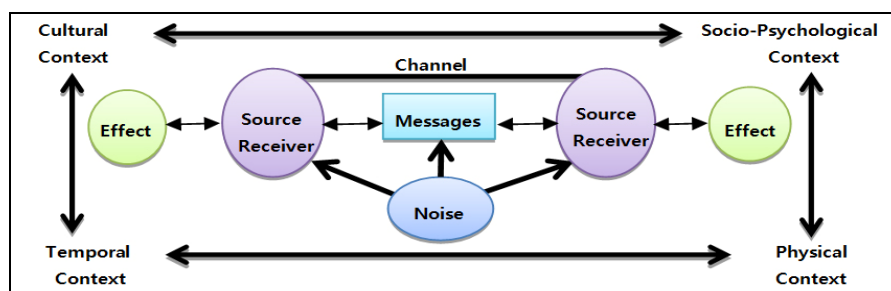


FIGURE 1 The elements of human communication (DeVito, 2015, p. 9)

PS is the process of designing and delivering a message to an audience in a

verbal manner. In other words, PS is the activity of communicating knowledge and expressing ideas to a group of people through a monologue. The ability to communicate effectively with other individuals or groups is essential in school, business, or even in one's personal life, since it is the primary medium for presenting one's ideas. Thus, PS is communication in which one person gives a speech to other people, most often in a public setting (Griffin & Bone, 2014).

O'Hair, Stewart and Rubenstein (2015) have classified human communication into four categories: dyadic, small group, mass, and PS. Unlike dyadic communication happening between two people, small group communication involves a small number of people, and mass communication occurs between a speaker and a large audience of mutually unknown people. In PS, a speaker delivers a message with a specific purpose to large groups of people. Also PS always includes a speaker who has a message with a specific purpose. Furthermore, public speakers address audiences largely without any interruption and take responsibility for what the speaker says and does.

In line with a series of distinctive features, PS shares both similarities and differences with other forms of communication. Like dyadic communication, PS helps to make oneself understood, involved, active, responsive to one's partner, and more responsible for what one says. As in small-group communication, PS requires a group of people who expect the speaker to better discuss issues that are relevant to the topic s/he presents. And like mass communication, PS appeals to the audience's attitudes, interests, desires, expectations (vis a vis goals), and values. Thus, successful public speakers share their message in a way that is organized and easy to follow, reliable, relevant, and interesting. What's more, the audience has expectations about the speaker's topic and ideas to be expressed in a more knowledgeable and unbiased manner (O'Hair et al., 2015).

In addition to verbal features, PS is also a form of face-to-face communication that nonverbally accompanies a certain message about a variety of effects to achieve one's purpose whether or not a message is intended. Unlike verbal communication which involves words, nonverbal communication is the process of conveying meaning without speaking by using many human behaviors and multiple codes via body movement and gestures, facial expressions and eye behavior, vocal characteristics like paralanguage, time, space, physical appearance and objective language (Griffin & Bone, 2014; Trenholm, 2014).

According to the characteristics of a speech, speeches can be largely classified into four types of PS like Table 1 below (O'Hair et al., 2015), including an introductory speech. The purpose of PS is mostly to persuade the audience. Depending on specific cases, types of PS can be seen in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
Major Types of Public Speaking

Types of Public Speaking	Forms of Examples
Introductory Speech	Speeches of introduction, introducing other people...
Informative Speech	Present, describe, demonstrate and explain certain information; Speeches about objects, phenomena, people, events, processes, issues, and concepts...
Persuasive Speech (Argumentative Speech)	State a claim, provide evidence and provide reasons on topical/categorical/chronological/spatial/narrative/causal/problem-solution/problem-cause-sequence, comparative advantage/refutation manners...
Special Occasion (Inspirational Speech)	Entertainment, celebration, commemoration, inspiration and social agenda-setting: Speeches of introduction, speeches of acceptance, speeches of presentation, roasts and toasts, eulogies and other tributes, after-dinner speeches, and speeches of inspiration...

## 2. Communication Strategies and Public Speaking Anxiety

Great public speakers look effortless because they pour a lot of effort into being great. In other words, great public speakers are made, not born (Gallo, 2015). Speaking communication is like a comprehensive art. Therefore, it requires numerous and complex skills that students can apply in other disciplines, including those of researching, writing and outlining, listening and critical analysis. As in public speaking, courses in writing and composition, history, sociology, philosophy, and many more also require that they research topics, outline and organize ideas, construct claims, and logically support them (O’Hair et al., 2015).

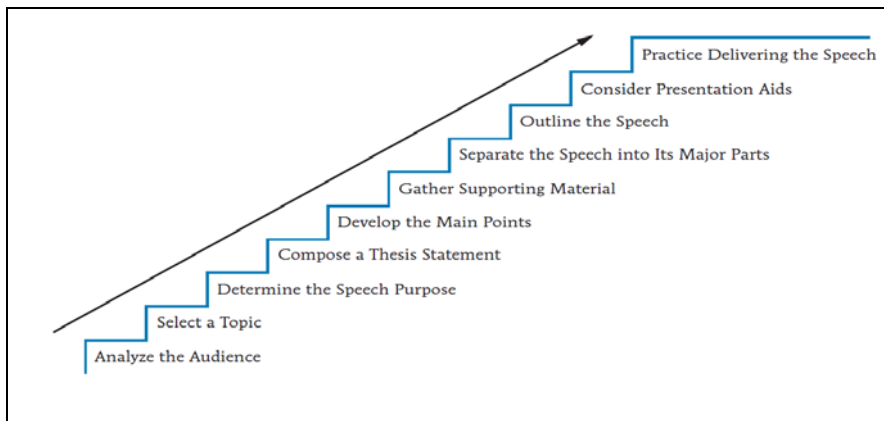
According to *Getting There: A Book of Mentors* by Gillian Zoe Segal (2015), billionaire Warren Buffett says:

Up until the age of 20, I was absolutely unable to speak in public. ...I don’t have my diploma from the University of Nebraska hanging on my office wall, and I don’t have my diploma from Columbia up there either—but I do have my Dale Carnegie graduation certificate proudly displayed. That \$100 course gave me the most important degree. It’s certainly had the biggest impact in terms of my subsequent success. (pp. 15-16)

The writer of the book noted that when Buffet started his first job selling securities he realized that public speaking skills were a requirement for success. He

stressed that PS is an essential skill and a vital asset that will last a lifetime.

With regard to communication strategies, here are three methods for improving PS skills: 1) holistically establishing/designing the context/framework, 2) fearlessly overcoming speaking anxiety, and 3) effectively delivering the content. First, in order to holistically design the context/framework like a panorama throughout the speechmaking process, as shown in Figure 2, the speaker should first analyze the audience, select a topic relevant to the audience, and determine the speech's purpose. In the subsequent task, the speaker should compose a thesis statement, develop the main points, gather supporting material, and separate the speech into its major parts. In the pre-speech phase, the speaker should outline the speech and consider using presentation aids in the presentation venue, as well as practice delivering the speech as they would in real-life. Throughout the preparation process, the speaker may have to manage the whole process in a step-by-step fashion, or perhaps even interact with the audience.



**FIGURE 2** Steps in the Speechmaking Process (O’Hair et al., 2015, p. 19)

Second, overcoming speaking anxiety is the most challenging obstacle to becoming a great public speaker. James (2002) noted that “according to surveys, many people in America rank speaking in public as one of the greatest fears of their lives and stated some individuals have ranked the fear of PS ahead of their fears of financial difficulty, illness, or even death” (p. 15). These fears can be overcome with practice and relaxation techniques, as well as an understanding of how to deal with any barriers to communication that may exist.

In fact, everyone experiences some type of anxiety in PS. In the process of public communication, anxiety has much to do with the physical and physiological dimensions as well as the social and psychological dimensions of making a speech

(O’Hair et al., 2015). During the speech, particularly a speech before a group leads to *speech anxiety* defined as communication apprehension. Actually the speaker communicates with groups of people by delivering his/her speech. Establishing practical strategies on how to overcome or reduce speech anxiety will help the speaker control any nervous mannerisms such as dry mouth, crackling voice, wrenching hands and pounding hearts.

Throughout the speechmaking process, step-by-step anxiety can slowly but surely preoccupy the speaker although the speaker may have a different level of anxiety (from lowest to highest) in one phase than one has in another phase. Anyone can experience anxiety, such as pre-preparation anxiety, preparation anxiety, pre-performance anxiety, performance anxiety (introduction, body, and conclusion) and sometimes even post-performance anxiety (O’Hair et al., 2015).

A recent study suggests that people unfamiliar with communication theory think that stage fright is caused mostly by what happens during the speech (Bippus & Daly, 1999). In actuality, what happens before the speech affects the speaker’s state of mind as much as—if not more so—the speech itself. In other words, practice and preparation are two of the best ways to eliminate stage fright. Like the old saying goes, “Practice makes perfect”.

Finally, PS experts stress the importance of practicing according to a fully-developed outline in order for the speaker to deliver the content naturally and effectively much like a blueprint for architecture (Hemmert, 2008; Lucas, 2009; Marshall, 2013). Methods of delivery include: manuscript delivery, memorized delivery, impromptu delivery, and extemporaneous delivery (O’Hair et al., 2015). In any strategy of making a speech, the speaker’s delivery should be natural, even if it is a memorized speech. Also the speaker needs to tap into the audience’s emotions and feelings by analyzing the audience beforehand and imagining the audience is with them throughout the preparation stage.

It is said that about 60% of communication is done nonverbally (Mehrabian, 1972). Nonverbal behaviors function to clarify the message and help the speaker to establish credibility by affecting the audience’s perception of competence, trustworthiness, and character. Also appropriate gestures and body movements help to clarify the meaning of the speaker’s words and emphasize what s/he feels is “the bottom line” in the presentation. The speaker’s movements, gestures, and facial expressions should all appear natural and spontaneous. Using good eye contact establishes a relationship between the speaker and audience.

Oral communication strategies consist of some “do’s and don’ts”. In most cases, it is essential for the person to communicate as successfully as possible from the very beginning of the recovery process. Eventually, getting comfortable speaking

with some fear in public can be a great confidence booster, not to mention a huge benefit for career development. PS activities will give students some basic PS skills, including an in-depth understanding on developing an engaging program and delivering their presentation with power (O’Hair et al., 2015). A speaker can be an interdependent listener as well as a responsive listener. Thus, successful speakers adjust their message based on their listeners’ reactions, and vice versa.

### III. METHOD

#### 1. Participants

The survey participants were twenty-three students (10 females, 13 males) who registered for the course entitled, “Introduction to Public Speaking”. Of these 23 students, the researcher interviewed five sophomores with excessive PSA, 3 females and 2 males from three different countries: 2 American students majoring in chemistry and computer science, 2 Chinese students majoring in biology and economics, and 1 Korean majoring in international business. Table 2 indicates some variables of the interview participants.

**TABLE 2**  
Summary of Interview Participant Variables

Interviewee	Gender	Year	Major	Nationality
A	F	Sophomore	Chemistry	American
B	M	Sophomore	Computer Science	American
C	F	Sophomore	Biology	Chinese
D	M	Sophomore	Economics	Chinese
E	F	Sophomore	International Business	Korean

They all enrolled in the public speaking class as a required course which met for one hour three days a week. They all had the common denominator of no prior experience in systematic and well-planned PS courses. They practiced by themselves and sometimes practiced in groups with the same topic. The 23 students enrolled in this class participated in a Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) survey as a pre-test in week 1 and a post-test in week 16.

## 2. Instruments and Procedures

### 1) Public Speaking Presentation

In developing public speaking, the course consisted of a four-time PS lecture after the introduction. Each speaking presentation was followed up by related information such as YouTube videos or useful ideas and information that students could think about using as they prepared for presenting their speeches to the class. First of all, in week 4, students conducted 2-3 minute introductory speeches which were not recorded and just offered individual comments or peer evaluations for rehearsal. Second, in week 6, students carried out their 5-7 minute informative speeches. The listeners needed to comment and evaluate their peers individually by using the "Peer-Evaluation Form" which they handed to the speaker after his/her speech. Third, in week 9, students had to go through the most important path, a 7-9 minute persuasive speech. Fourth, in week 12, students presented 8-10 minute special occasion speeches individually like wedding celebrations, inspirations, reward congratulations, and funeral remarks.

### 2) Questionnaire and Interview

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire used to identify PSA through "PRPSA"<sup>1</sup> which measures students' levels of communication anxiety. Students responded to a pre-test questionnaire before the actual class, and a post-test questionnaire at the end of the class. To express their thoughts and opinions about PS, the questionnaire included 5-level Likert items (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree). Additionally, five students responded to open-ended interview questions.

Interviews were conducted at the end of class in the form of feedback to interview questions with five students in order to investigate their understandings/perceptions of PS activities. These five students were chosen as the result of the researcher previewing students' responses about PS on surveys. Finally, the researcher observed the interviewees' PS activities alongside the instructor of the course, an American professor.

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA)'s questionnaire was developed by McCroskey in 1970 in order to measure communication-bound anxiety. The researcher used this on pre- and post-tests to compare students' responses.

### 3) Instruction Procedures

This PS course was “an introduction to verbal communication in groups, listening, and public speaking. Emphasis will be placed on speaking with delivery issues, speech construction, audience connection, and the communication process.” The overall goal of this course was to help students develop an understanding of the principles of effective oral communication. More specifically, the instructor designed the course to help students: a) Read, write, speak and listen effectively; b) Demonstrate skills in character/ethics in speech preparation and delivery; c) Demonstrate a foundational understanding of communication theory involving the oral presentation process; d) Present and evaluate skills of oral communication for future career development.

The PS procedures of the class consisted of four phases: Introductory speech, Informative Speech, Persuasive Speech and Special Occasion Speech (see Table 3). The phrases and their descriptions of each speech include definition, method, time length, and purpose. During the course, students were required to read the designated chapters from the textbook.

**TABLE 3**  
Major Speech Activity Flow

Steps	Detailed Activities
Pre-Speech Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Ice-breaking interactions or a simple pre-test</li> <li>· Stress-reducing techniques for pre-preparation anxiety, preparation anxiety, pre-performance anxiety</li> <li>· Analyze the audience</li> <li>· Outlining the speech: Selecting a topic and purpose, developing supporting materials, organizing the body of the speech</li> <li>· Developing the introduction, the body and the conclusion</li> <li>· Designing the methods and forms of speeches, and presentation aids</li> <li>· Speech packet checklist: Working outline, speaking outline, references, and miscellaneous</li> </ul>
During-Speech Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Use the stress-reducing techniques for performance anxiety</li> <li>· Check the delivery methods such as voice and body in delivery</li> <li>· Forms of speeches: informative speech, persuasive speech, and special occasion speeches</li> <li>· Recording the speech</li> <li>· Performance Assessment</li> </ul>
Post-Speech Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Use stress-reducing techniques for post-performance anxiety</li> <li>· Exchange “Peer-Evaluation Form”</li> <li>· Self-evaluation assignment and speech self-critique</li> <li>· Instructor’s speech notes</li> <li>· Comprehensive comments and suggestions</li> <li>· Questions &amp; answers, and feedback</li> </ul>

The midterm exam consisted of 100 points possible. Exam questions were taken from the text and in-class discussions. The exam contained a mixture of multiple-choice, true/false, fill in the blank and short-essay questions. The final exam consisted of a reflection, application, analysis and synthesis of the materials covered in the text and in class and an impromptu speech. Throughout the whole speechmaking process, the major speech activity flow was essentially important as indicated in Table 3. Each step had detailed activities depending on the types of speeches and the whole operation of the course.

### 3. Data Collection and Analysis

The descriptive analysis of the questionnaire on PSA was utilized to identify enrolled students' perceptions and levels toward PSA through PRPSA both at the beginning and the end of the class. The collected samples were analyzed in terms of descriptive statistics through the program SPSS 14.0.

For the second research question, an activity observation log for five students was utilized in order to identify individual processes in public speaking. As part of the second question, an individual interview was conducted to see whether there were significant differences according to the timeline of the schedule at the end of the class. Students were interviewed based on their speaking activities to give them feedback. At the end, all students participated in PRPSA again as a post-test according to qualitative research methodology.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Students' Public Speaking Anxieties

In order to identify students' PSA, data was collected via a questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral (undecided), 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree) completed by all 23 students enrolled in the PS course. In addition, five students were provided with open-ended interview questions on paper in which they were asked to write down their perceptions and opinions about PSA. Following that, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the same five volunteer participants of the three different nationalities shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 4**  
Results of the PSA Questionnaire ( $n = 23$ )

PSA Questions	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. While preparing for giving a speech, I feel tense and nervous.	2.52	1.12	3.13	.97
2. I feel tense when I see the words <i>speech and public speech</i> on a course outline when studying.	3.26	1.14	3.48	1.31
3. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.	3.04	.88	3.30	1.02
4. Right after giving a speech I feel that I have had a pleasant experience.	3.00	.95	2.87	1.10
5. I get anxious when I think a speech coming up.	2.61	.84	2.83	1.11
6. I have no fear of giving a speech.	3.70	1.26	3.26	1.29
7. Although I am nervous just before starting a speech, I soon settle down after starting and feel calm and comfortable.	2.61	1.03	2.70	1.15
8. I look forward to giving a speech.	3.66	1.11	3.74	1.21
9. When the instructor announces a speaking assignment in class, I can feel myself getting tense.	3.04	1.11	3.52	.90
10. My hands tremble when I am giving a speech.	3.30	1.22	3.70	1.22
11. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.	3.30	1.11	3.30	1.19
12. I enjoy preparing for a speech.	3.40	1.03	3.48	1.20
13. I am in constant fear of forgetting what I prepared to say.	2.87	1.18	3.22	1.00
14. I get anxious if someone asks me something about my topic that I do not know.	2.70	1.15	3.26	.96
15. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.	2.91	1.04	2.57	1.08
16. I feel that I am in complete possession of myself while giving a speech.	2.78	.75	2.44	.90
17. My mind is clear when giving a speech.	2.87	.92	2.52	.90
18. I do not dread giving a speech.	2.96	1.11	3.30	1.15
19. I perspire just before starting a speech.	3.13	.81	3.83	.94
20. My heart beats very fast as I start a speech.	2.27	.96	2.61	.84

The results of the PRPSA in Table 4 show that participants felt more comfortable and less nervous at the time of the pre-test than they did at the time of

the post-test in aspects of preparation. Just at the thought of delivering a speech or the speech course itself, the fear of giving a speech was met with their hands trembling (see items 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, and 13). They also gradually felt more and more anxiety when they encountered speaking assignments and topic questions (see items 9 and 14). However, physical and psychological burdens tended to decrease with time in terms of their heartbeat, perspiring right before starting a speech, dread about PS, and discomfort (see items 6, 7, 18, 19 and 20). Overall, students had a comparatively high level of PSA and did not yearn to engage in PS (see items 8, 11, 12 and 15).

**TABLE 5**  
Results of the PSA Questionnaire ( $n = 23$ )

PSA Questions	Pre-test		Post-test	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
21. I experience considerable anxiety while sitting in the room just before my speech starts.	2.35	.93	3.00	1.04
22. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.	3.30	.93	3.61	.99
23. Realizing that only a little time remains in a speech makes me very tense and anxious.	3.13	1.06	3.70	1.02
24. While giving a speech, I know I can control my feelings of tension and stress.	2.78	1.00	2.61	.90
25. I breathe faster just before starting a speech.	3.00	1.13	3.61	.99
26. I feel comfortable and relaxed in the hour or so just before giving a speech.	3.48	.99	3.17	1.07
27. I do poorer on speeches because I am anxious.	3.40	1.12	3.52	1.00
28. I feel anxious when the teacher announces the date of a speaking assignment.	3.00	1.00	3.50	1.00
29. When I make a mistake while giving a speech, I find it hard to concentrate on the parts that follow.	2.87	.92	3.43	1.04
30. During an important speech I experience a feeling of helplessness building up inside me.	3.65	.98	3.61	1.03
31. I have trouble falling asleep the night before a speech.	3.65	1.20	4.30	.93
32. My heart beats very fast while I present a speech.	2.65	1.03	3.26	1.14
33. I feel anxious while waiting to give my speech.	2.09	1.00	2.43	1.08
34. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.	3.00	.95	3.52	.95

PSA can range from a slightly nervous feeling to being scared to death. Students felt nervous prior to and during the time they gave a speech, and sometimes even

after their speeches were already delivered. Table 5 shows that except for items 24, 26 and 30, the means of post-test items were increasing between the pre-test and post-test. This means that with time students felt less anxious regarding the speeches themselves and speech-related subsidiaries even though they made mistakes while giving speeches. Especially, in the hour or so just before giving a speech, students felt slightly more comfortable, whereas they felt the most anxious while waiting to give a speech.

The interview also revealed that students generally prefer preparing for making speeches through group discussion as a way of reducing their communicative anxiety. Possible ways of coping with speaking anxiety were investigated from students' perspectives through open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Regarding Chinese and Korean students, it was found that linguistic difficulties (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation), cognitive and emotional challenges (fear of failure in front of others, stage fright, fear of failure in communication, lack of self-esteem, fear of making mistakes), and competitiveness were correlates of PSA.

When in PS class I didn't really understand the connection I needed to have to be able to make a good speech, but I do believe that group activities help with the pressure of the speech itself, making the audience look more relatable. (Interviewee B, American 2)

I think that group discussion didn't help me a lot, because I considered that to overcome PSA, we need to say something first, not just wait for others' answers. In addition, in the group discussion, some extroverted students will have more opportunities to show their strengths. However, if we have a rule of speaking in turn, group discussions would be a good way of reducing anxiety. (Interviewee E, Korean)

Overall, students' responses to the interview questions suggest that students want to speak better in public and improve their oral communication skills. PSA is multilateral, situation-specific anxiety that arises from the actual or anticipated implementation of an oral presentation. The root of PSA is different from the feelings of members of the audience. A lack of positive public speaking, great social pressure, unfamiliarity of a situation, sudden loss of memory while speaking, no prior experience in speaking on stage, a lack of self-confidence, and discomfort about being the center of attention are all causes of stage fright.

A recent Gallop poll (Brewer, 2001) asked American adults what they were afraid of. 40 percent of those surveyed said they feared speaking in public in front of an audience. Wilder (1999) noted that “One of the biggest misconceptions about public speaking is that those who are best at it are ‘naturals’ who don’t need practice” (p. 22). He mentioned Ronald Reagan as a counter-example. For a major speech, he’d close his doors and spend at least 12 hours practicing out loud.

To determine the score on the PRPSA, the researcher completed the following steps: 1) Add the scores for items 1-3, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19-23, 25, 27-34 = \_\_\_\_, 2) Add the scores for items 4, 6-8, 11, 12, 15-18, 24, and 26 = \_\_\_\_, 3) Complete the following formula: PRPSA = 132 – (total from step 1) + (total from step 2). This formula was developed by Richmond and McCroskey (1985). Students’ scores should range between 34 and 170.

**TABLE 6**  
Students’ Anxiety About Public Speaking (*n* = 23)

Score	34-84	85-92	93-110	111-119	120-170
Anxiety Level	Low	Moderately Low	Moderate	Moderately High	Very High
Pre-test	6	2	2	4	9
Post-test	6	4	9	1	3

Table 6 shows the score change between pre-test and post-test on PRPSA. A peculiar point in Table 6 is that in the pre-test thirteen students felt high to very high anxiety compared to just four students in the post-test. Students with high anxiety moved to moderate (9) or moderately low (4). Also six students felt a low level of anxiety continuously from the pre-test to the post-test.

## 2. Public Speaking Results of Students From Different Nationalities

Speaking or presentation anxiety, commonly known as “stage fright,” the fear of PS, is attributable to extremely mixed reasons such as cultural, physical, linguistic, psychological (behavioral and cognitive), and social perspectives. Other potential barriers to intercultural understanding could trigger anxiety and mixed tension. Trenholm (2014) maintained that a small amount of tension and anxiety can be a facilitating factor, but a large amount is extremely debilitating. So “when the tension rises too high, individuals experience culture shock” (p. 338).

Table 7 indicates that the five interviewees of different nationalities showed individually different characteristics in PS activities. As shown in Table 7, the researcher perceived Chinese and Korean female students to be more anxious and tense. The Chinese male student was more active and outgoing, but when he delivered a speech he stood at the podium with minimal movement. He told me, "I was at a loss under great pressure with this heavy-burdened speech." Also they all focused on verbal communication or linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, and writing. He expressed himself like this: "As the speech went by, I regained myself after my thoughts became confused and jumbled in the middle for a while. I totally focused my thoughts on the delivery content, and rote-memorization." Also a female Chinese student responded to the researcher's question on ways to handle PSA with the following:

In preparation for PS, I got a wealth of help in writing. Ironically I invested a lot of time in writing speeches. Also while other students were delivering their speeches, I was trying to listen to them attentively. PS was one of the best ways to improve my listening ability since I can encounter a wide variety of topics and opinions through lots of different delivery voices, styles and forms of speeches. (Interviewee C, Chinese 1)

On the other hand, American students made public speeches more naturally. Therefore, the more students read, the more natural the speech became. They also jogged their memory through key words. Also they focused more on non-verbal communication skills such as eye-contact including facial expressions, gestures, distance, voice delivery and movement which actually accounted for most of their human communication. Even though they communicated with other people in their mother tongue, English, they also felt great anxiety.

In order to deliver a more natural speech, I tried to be more attentive to gestures, eye-contact, distance, and movement. I practiced my speech in front of a big mirror quite often before giving my speech. Also I made the outline of my speech more interesting and thoughtful with a wide range of evidence and opinions. So with sufficient practice, the key words spurred my memory. (Interviewee B, American 2)

**TABLE 7**  
Activity Observation Log

Items	Students	A (Female)	B (male)	C (Female)	D (Male)	E (Female)
Contents: Verbal Communi- cation	Intro- duction	Good thesis statement, preview of points	Video- good intro- duction	Fairly normal	Good use of questions	Used himself as an example
	Main Points	Followed outline well	Followed outline well	Followed outline	Followed outline well	Followed outline
	Con- clusion	Review of points- good	Recap of points	Hushed and soft	Summary of points	Good conclusion-que stions!
Outline Worksheet		4 pages and nine references	4.5 pages and eleven references	3 pages and four references	2.5 pages and three references	3.5 pages and six references
Non- Verbal Communi- cation	Eye- Contact	Tended to look at the left side	Looked at the room, up and down	Looked down at her notes	Looked at the instructor and her notes	Looked down at his notes mostly
	Voice	Easy to hear, vocal variety	Really good, easy to hear	A little soft and mono- tonous	Good, but somewhat soft	Pretty easy to understand
	Gestures	The further into the speech she got, the more natural she became	Pretty good, but perhaps a bit repetitive	Clasping hands, twisting the fingers	Fairly small and repetitive tapped right hand into left	Mostly with left hand but looked natural
	Movement	Stepped forward and back	Tended to shift weight and stayed at the podium	Very little	No movement	A little, stood behind podium mostly
	Facial Ex- pressions	More natural over time	Good facial ex- pressions	Often strained and stressful	Tense but communi- cative	Good facial ex- pressions
	Other	Tended to fade off at the end	Sometimes stopped in the middle	Often a bit of reading	Unfamiliar with electronics	Self- centered speech
Speed and Length (7-9')	A little fast- er: 7' 40"	Normal: 8' 30"	Normal: 8' 40"	Normal: 8' 10"	A little over time: 9' 20"	
Change of PRPSA Score	134→107	121→98	141→127	123→97	121→128	

Note. A, B: Americans; C, D: Chinese; E: Korean

In overcoming anxiety, there are differences between American students and Asian students such as the following. Learning from the interviewees, Chinese and Korean students tended to memorize the speech content in one way or another. They experienced a feeling of puzzlement when they forgot their message in the middle of their speeches. So they tried to find ways to overcome pre-preparation anxiety and preparation anxiety, and improve their verbal communication skills. In addition, they felt more anxious during the preparation of their speeches and right

before their speeches. Also they tried to talk directly to students sitting in the front row, connecting with them first in order to calm themselves down.

However, American students tended to match the message with movements including gestures and eye-contact. They tended to blend interactive association with verbal and nonverbal communication. Also they felt more anxious while giving the speech rather than starting the speech. Therefore, they tried to find ways of overcoming performance anxiety by enhancing their non-verbal communication skills. In addition, they tried to extend their eye contact to the whole class, moving back and forth, or forward and backward. They gradually used the podium without limiting themselves in an extended way, trying to interact with the whole audience.

I practiced it more than 5 times to overcome my anxiety. Then since I have more pre-performance anxiety just before giving a speech I practiced my speech in front of the mirror beforehand, noticing something inappropriate and changing it. I suspect that it can make my pronunciation more accurate. Finally, I used some flash cards to memorize the speech draft. (Interviewee D, Chinese 2)

I tend to get nervous, and often forget certain things to say. PS seems to be the most impactful way of delivering the message when the speaker properly performs with both verbal and nonverbal aspects of using appropriate gestures and tone. I also think that movement during the speech can help release some of the pent-up anxiety. I could develop better or more purposeful foot movements. (Interviewee A, American 1)

In terms of changes to PRPSA scores, Table 7 shows female participants generally felt more nervous than male participants regardless of their nationalities. That is, a female American student scored 107 points, a female Chinese student scored 127 points, and a female Korean student scored 128 points on the post-test. In contrast, a male American student scored 98 points and a male Chinese student scored 97 points on the post-test. A remarkable point is that the PRPSA scores of female Chinese and Korean students did not change remarkably. This suggests that the latter remained in the range of very high anxiety. However, two American students along with an outgoing Chinese male student meaningfully reduced anxiety from very high scopes to moderate scores as time went by.

Focusing on practicing for long periods of time to overcome PSA, public speaker Marshall (2013) has demonstrated that even professional speakers experience anxiety before delivering speeches, as evidenced by Thomas

Jefferson, the third U.S. president. His fear of speaking publicly was so severe that he gave only two public speeches during his entire presidency. Marshall has pointed out that trying to stop feeling anxious may make one feel even more anxious. The best solution for overcoming stage fright is to focus on the presentation, rather than oneself. O'Hair, Stewart, and Rubenstein (2012) expounded, "None of us is born knowing how to speak in public. As with anything else, PS is an acquired skill that improves with practice. It is also a skill that shares much in common with other familiar activities, such as conversing and writing, and it can be much less daunting when you realize that you can draw on expertise you already have" (p. 15).

Essentially, PS is commonly understood as a one-to-many form of communication wherein a single speaker addresses a large audience (Trenholm, 2014). That is, it includes formal, preplanned messages and more rigidly defined communication roles through face-to-face talking of a single person to a group of listeners. Many scholars have reported that oral performance is associated with language anxiety when giving speeches in class, interacting with a native speaker, or being corrected while speaking (Liu, 2007; Mark, 2011; Woodrow, 2006). Additionally, E. S. Park (2008) has also reported the same point that "students' anxiety in English classrooms was not simply related to speaking, but more specifically to speaking in front of their classmates and teachers" (p. 123).

These days, PS is an important determinant of professional job performance success regardless of the discipline or occupational categories. Therefore, EFL teachers need to help students become aware of their English-speaking anxiety, carefully minimizing anxiety-provoking situations and activating students' interactive verbal and non-verbal communication activities in the classroom.

## V. CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate participants' perceptions and levels toward PSA, and to analyze active observations of an American PS class with different nationalities by investigating two research questions. The quality of one's communication can lead to the quality of a better life. Especially in the era of communication, students can develop their careers to help people manage perceptions, maximize sales, and enhance leadership through improved communication. What's more, English speaking skills are becoming more crucial in this globalization era.

Regarding the first research question, students had a comparatively higher level

of PSA and did not have a desire to engage in PS, and felt the most anxious while waiting to give a speech. Regardless of students' nationalities, they felt nervous and tense, especially Chinese and Korean students, before giving speeches, whereas American students felt more nervous while giving speeches.

With reference to the second research question, there were different ways of coping with PSA and handling PS preparation and delivery strategies based on whether the speakers were EFL speakers or American speakers. EFL students mainly focused on linguistic and verbal communication, such as vocabulary selection, writing, and listening. However, American interviewees chiefly took advantage of nonverbal communication strategies like eye-contact, delivery tone, distance, movement and gestures to improve PS skills and overcome performance anxiety.

The limitations of this paper include the following: 1) This project was carried out at just one university in one English-speaking country with twenty-three students and five interviewees as a preliminary case study. It is limited in terms of generalizing the results of this paper. 2) This study did not cover the framework of all types of speeches, including a working and delivery outline.

Despite these limitations, however, this study demonstrates the imperativeness of EFL teachers elaborately designing the speaking framework for students in terms of connecting verbal communication elements together with nonverbal communication codes. Especially, for overcoming PSA in a real-world context, teachers need to develop an oral communication curriculum that is tangible and optimal in order for learners to utilize logos, pathos, and ethos in a real-time communication situation. Moreover, further studies are needed to handle effective and applicable strategies according to the types of speeches in the EFL context which address the limitations of the present study.

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**Examples in: English**

**Applicable Languages: English**

**Applicable Levels: Secondary, Higher Education**

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