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ORAL PRESENTATION ANXIETY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE MALAYSIAN CHINESE STUDENTS IN A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This research investigates presentation anxiety among undergraduate Malaysian Chinese students in a private university where English language is used as a medium of instruction in private universities in Malaysia. There is little research on the difficulties in the teaching and learning such as presentation anxiety among ESL (English as a Second Language) Malaysian Chinese students. The objectives of this study are to explore the different levels of presentation anxiety and to identify coping strategies used by the students with English-speaking anxiety among undergraduate Malaysian Chinese students in a private university. Hence, a mixed method approach is used which involves a questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Sixty participants responded to the English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (ELCAS) questionnaire and six interviewees who took part in the questionnaire were purposively chosen to conduct the interview. ELCAS Quantitative results indicated that ESL Malaysian Chinese students in the private university showed moderate levels of presentation anxiety when doing presentations. As for the qualitative data, the findings revealed that students often rehearse and practice before their presentation to cope with the existing anxiety. We suggest that language instructors are to deliver a more positive learning environment and to provide adequate guidance in class to improve the presentation skills and speaking skills among ESL Malaysian Chinese students as well as other ESL and EFL (English as Foreign Language) students.

Keywords: Coping Strategies; English as a Second Language (ESL); Mixed Method; Oral Presentation Anxiety

Abstrak

Penyelidikan ini menyiasat kebimbangan pembentangan dalam kalangan pelajar prasiswazah Cina Malaysia di universiti swasta di mana Bahasa Inggeris digunakan sebagai bahasa pengantar di universiti swasta di Malaysia. Terdapat kekurangan dalam kajian tentang kesukaran dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran seperti keresahan ketika melakukan pembentangan dalam kalangan pelajar Cina Malaysia *ESL* (Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua). Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka tahap kebimbangan pembentangan yang berbeza dan untuk mengenal pasti strategi mengatasi yang digunakan oleh pelajar yang mempunyai kebimbangan berbahasa Inggeris dalam kalangan pelajar prasiswazah Cina Malaysia di universiti swasta. Oleh itu, pendekatan kaedah campuran digunakan yang melibatkan soal selidik dan temu bual separa berstruktur. Enam puluh peserta menjawab soal selidik *English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (ELCAS) dan enam orang yang ditemu bual yang mengambil bahagian dalam soal selidik telah dipilih secara sengaja untuk menjalankan temu bual. Keputusan kuantitatif ELCAS menunjukkan bahawa pelajar *ESL*, Cina Malaysia di universiti swasta menunjukkan tahap kebimbangan pembentangan yang sederhana semasa membuat pembentangan. Bagi data kualitatif pula, dapatan mendapati pelajar sering membuat latihan dan latihan sebelum pembentangan mereka untuk mengatasi kebimbangan yang sedia ada. Kami mencadangkan pengajar bahasa supaya menyediakan persekitaran pembelajaran yang lebih positif dan bimbingan yang mencukupi dalam kelas untuk meningkatkan kemahiran pembentangan dan kemahiran bertutur dalam kalangan pelajar *ESL* Cina Malaysia serta pelajar *ESL* dan *EFL* (Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing) yang lain.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua; Kaedah Campuran; Kebimbangan Pembentangan Lisan; Strategi Mengatasi

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Low level of English proficiency among public Malaysian university students is often the issue that is being discussed by the education policy makers (Chin et al., 2016), and also possibly due to the poor language teaching among the educators who possess poor grasp of English language or having inappropriate teaching methods (Ee, 2012; Mosha, 2014). These factors that lead to low English proficiency further contribute to the speaking anxiety among university students as they might consistently experience worries and are anxious in their learning and thinking in the learning environment (Darmi & Albion, 2013; Latif & Binti, 2015). Thus, there is a need to address this issue when investigating the levels of English-speaking anxiety and coping strategies to overcome it among undergraduate Malaysians in private universities. It is also possible that students experience speaking anxiety due to the influence of the dominant

language in Malaysia, Malay language as it is the official language. Furthermore, most likely the interchangeability of language and other language influences further affect the way students express their English language in class (How et al., 2015).

Moreover, it can be seen that many past studies have been conducted on aspects of speaking anxiety in relation to gender and races such as studies among Malaysian Muslim students (Badrasawi et al., 2020; Hamzah, 2007), studies among Malaysian Indian students (Murthy & Yeo, 2018; Kaur & Bhangu, 2013), and studies among International students who studied in Malaysia (Taly & Paramasivam, 2020; Diao & Shamala, 2013). However, there is a dearth in research on English language speaking anxiety on a specific race in a classroom context, especially for Malaysian Chinese students (Du, 2019). Thus, the topic of this research is under-researched (Du, 2019). Hence, Miskam and Saidalvi (2019) elaborated that the aspects of English language speaking anxiety in ESL students and coping strategies used to cope with language anxiety by students in Malaysia require further research.

Taly and Paramasivam (2020) stated that researching in the field of speaking anxiety is significant for the ESL community to be able to understand that speaking anxiety is a challenging issue for apprehensive individuals by allowing them to identify their self-identity, self-esteem, and self-confidence through the proposed coping strategies. Hence, the rationale of the study further assists lecturers in understanding certain factors that lead to student anxiety and allowing them to identify students with speaking anxiety in classroom by referring to the proposed anxiety coping strategies in this study to aid them in their teaching process. Therefore, the first research objective of the study is to explore the different levels of presentation anxiety among undergraduate Malaysian Chinese students in a Private University. The second research objective of the study is to identify the strategies that are used by the students to cope with English-speaking anxiety.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Nordquist (2020) stated that presentation anxiety is the intense worry and fear that an individual experience when doing a presentation to an audience, this notion is further elaborated that presentation anxiety is similar to a stage fright which is similar to Horwitz et al. (1986) notion of fear of evaluation by peers and a communication apprehension which is a rise in tension during the use of English language in a class presentation. Presentation anxiety is developed when doing an oral presentation, speech delivery, and in the process of language learning (Arafah et al., 2017). Presentation anxiety is also manifested in individuals who use English as their second language (Pontillas, 2020). The topic is discussed further in the

subsequent sections from three perspectives, in the Malaysian context and abroad (ESL and EFL) as well as gender differences.

2.1 ESL Presentation Anxiety in Malaysia

Tati et al. (2016) investigated the factors that lead to speaking anxiety and strategies that are used to cope with speaking anxiety among college students from a minority area in Sabah and Kedah, Malaysia. In the study, qualitative method was used in this study where semi-structured interviews were conducted on 15 respondents to identify the reasons for having speaking anxiety and how they managed to cope with this issue in class. The findings of the study have shown that the respondents are embarrassed (communication apprehension), anxious and they lack self-confidence (fear of negative evaluation) during English presentations because English language is not commonly used in the college. Thus, this lack of English exposure has caused them to have other problems related to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Moreover, a mixed-method study done on speaking anxiety among 125 undergraduate students from a public university in Malaysia by Kamaruddin and Abdullah (2015) who investigated the level of English language anxiety, the causal factors, and strategies to cope with speaking anxiety. The findings of their study revealed that writing skills learned through written assignments was one of the main factors that contributed to overcoming their speaking anxiety in class. The findings of the study revealed that in class, and they further identified that the use of English language in the interaction between the instructor and the students also mainly contributed to overcoming the speaking anxiety among undergraduate students from public university whereby there is a lack of communication between both parties. Moreover, the study reported that the students tend to have mental and physical preparation as a way to cope with their speaking anxiety before doing any English-related speaking tasks or even when asking questions in class.

2.2 EFL Presentation Anxiety Abroad

Sadiq (2017) investigated the level of foreign language anxiety among 100 university students in Saudi Arabia with Arabic mother tongue. They were recruited via random sampling and given the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986) to determine their level of presentation anxiety. The results revealed that speaking anxiety exists among university students in Saudi Arabia regardless of the entry year of their studies and their age. Besides, Abbasi et al. (2019) studied the factors that affect the English speech among 40 undergraduate computer science students at Sindh Madressatul Islam University (SMIU), Karachi in Pakistan through the use of Likert scale close-ended questions regarding

their presentation anxiety in class. In a similar qualitative study (Soomro et al., 2019) conducted on 100 undergraduate engineering students in Pakistan by investigating the factors that affect their presentation performances through an adopted five-point-likert-scale questionnaire (McCroskey, 1982) regarding oral anxiety. They found out that most of the participants experienced low motivation, nervousness, and low confidence when doing presentations in class.

2.3 Gender Differences on Presentation Anxiety

In this section, gender differences related to presentation anxiety are explained in brief as several past studies have mentioned that male and female students experience different types of presentation anxiety in the classroom. For instance, Hwa and Peck (2017) quantitatively researched the topic to examine gender differences in speaking anxiety among 237 Malaysian tertiary ESL student and they further determined their level of speaking anxiety in the ESL classroom. Through the FLCAS results, the study found out the students experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety in class, but for gender-wise, females have a higher level of speaking anxiety than male students, and the factors that cause them to have a higher level of speaking anxiety include the fear of negative evaluation (trait anxiety) and psychological anxiety (state anxiety) in ESL classroom.

Furthermore, Marx (2019) investigated gender differences that affect foreign language learning among 93 (49 males and 44 females) third year junior high school students in Japan. Their findings have shown that female students experienced more presentation anxiety, mainly due to the influence of having to speak English in the classroom and the fear of negative evaluation from peers or lecturers. Marx further elaborated that educators play an important role through practicing impromptu speeches for students to minimize presentation anxiety and this promotes a lively classroom environment.

Overall, the reviewed studies (Anggita & Suwartono, 2020; Abassi et al., 2019; Soomro et al., 2019; Marx, 2019; Sadiq, 2017; Hwa & Peck, 2017; Tati et al., 2016; Kamaruddin & Abdullah, 2015) that have utilized Horwitz et al.'s Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) reported a similar pattern for the causes of presentation anxiety which are mainly due to the fear of negative evaluation from others, lack of language competence, and communication apprehension among students.

3.0 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The scale of classroom anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986) is adapted and used as a framework as outlined below in Figure 1. Horwitz's et al. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom

Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is renamed as English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (ELCAS) as shown in Figure 2 below; minor amendments were made on the items because some researchers have translated the questionnaire from English into Malay to conduct their study on Malay secondary students in Malaysia and found out that this framework has high reliability and it is useful and applicable to any language to measure speaking anxiety in class (Sham & Azmi, 2018).

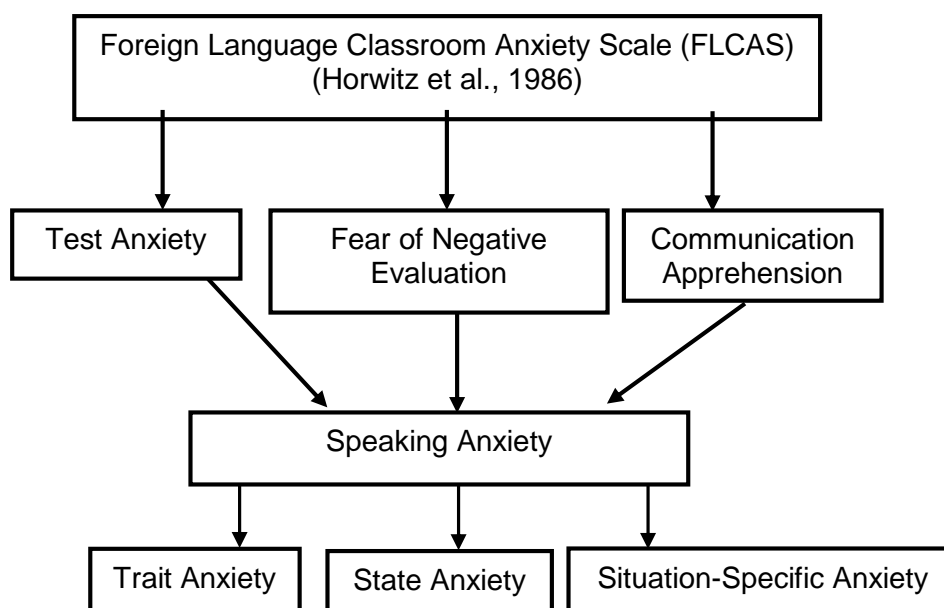


Figure 1: Horwitz et al. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

As shown in Figure 1, Horwitz et al. (1986) designed Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure the learners' foreign language anxiety in classroom context. This scale has been widely used by some researchers in investigating foreign language anxiety in the learning process (Latif, 2015; Rafek et al., 2015; Chin et al., 2016). This scale is used because it is useful for researchers to investigate the existing presentation anxiety in English classroom environment, and it has proven that the measurement of these three dimensions of anxiety (communication anxiety, academic anxiety, and class anxiety) is highly reliable and valid in the FLCAS (Du, 2019). The FLCAS is classified into three components used to measure the levels of language anxiety: Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. Communication Apprehension associates with the fear of communication which results from internal feelings; Test Anxiety refers to the use of a specific language to conduct and achieve something such as fear of failing school's test; and Fear of Negative Evaluation is a notion of worrying about other's negative evaluation on oneself. Furthermore, this scale consists of 33 items categorized according to the three types of presentation anxiety (trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety). Trait anxiety refers to having embarrassment and is associated with the fear of communicating with others,

such as conducting discussions. State anxiety is where a person feels anxious in class. Situation-specific anxiety refers to the anxiety of having to use a second language in class.

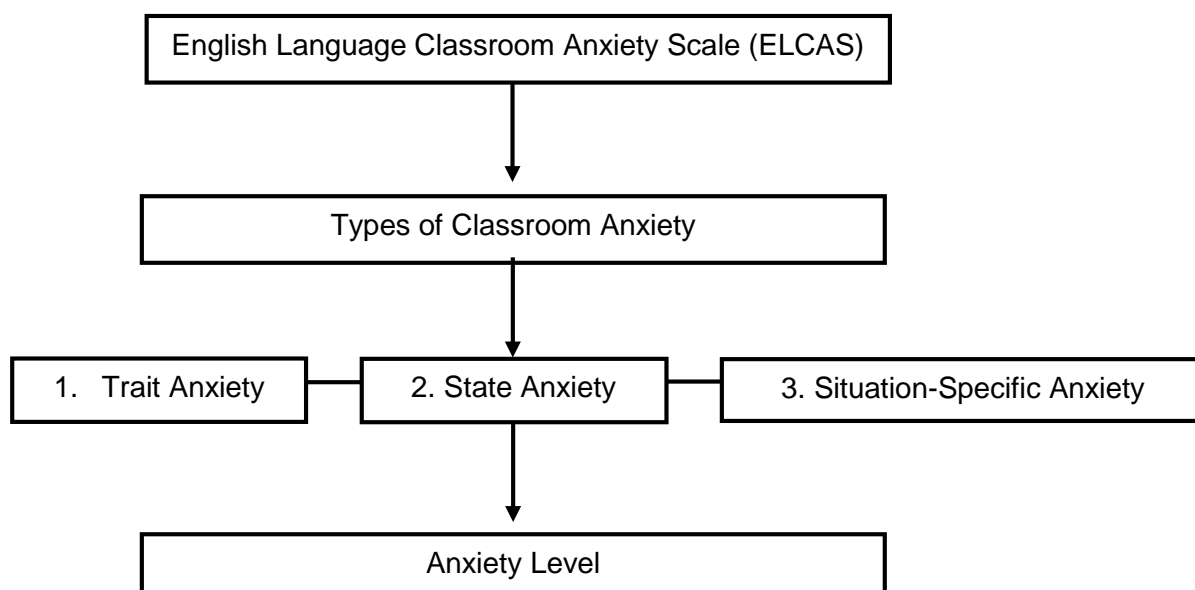


Figure 2: Horwitz's et al. (1986) scale adapted, renamed as English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (ELCAS)

4.0 METHODOLOGY

A mixed method which is the integration of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is used in this study as it allows the researchers to ensure validity (Creswell, 2014). For the quantitative data collection and quota sampling method, a total of 60 participants from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Liberal Arts (FoSSLA) willingly participated in this study; all of them were Chinese Malaysian students who were currently studying in the target private university. The use of purposive sampling method is to obtain data from 60 selected individuals to provide detailed and sufficient data that is representative to the study (Creswell, 2014). Quota sampling is where the research is being guided by some visible characteristics of the study population that is in the interest of the research (Kumar, 2019). For the sample size of the quantitative data, quota sampling was used to examine the strata of students who share similar characteristics (Undergraduate Malaysian Chinese) or entities of a specific interest (undertaking social science courses) and is representative from the whole population of social science students (Elder, 2009).

Pertaining to the qualitative data collection, a mobile phone recorder and online communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Skype were the aiding tools that are used to record the spoken responses obtained from the selected 6 interviewees who scored

differently in the questionnaire. Then, the main recurring themes emerged from the 6 interviews were tabulated and discussed. A purposive sampling method is used to further obtain more in-depth insights. Out of the 60 participants who responded to the questionnaire items, six interviewees were chosen purposively to conduct a semi-structured interview individually. For the data collection criteria, firstly, consent was obtained from all the participants involved in this study. Secondly, each participant must have completed the necessary English related subjects that include presentations as a component (e.g. Written Discourse, Persuasive Speech, English Foundation, Basic English, and/or other English related courses). Thirdly, each participant must have obtained some knowledge in the field of linguistics, especially basic grammar and pronunciation.

Pertaining to the triangulation of data, firstly, there is internal validity that is concerned with the congruence of the research findings; and secondly the triangulation for this research was done by having more than one method of data collection by collecting relevant information from a variety of sources helped to confirm the findings. In general, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (1998) suggested that the dependability of the results can be ensured through the use of three techniques: the investigator's position, triangulation and audit trail. In this research, we in the investigator's position explained explicitly the different processes and phases of the inquiry to increase reliability, and described in detail the rationale of the study, design of the study and the subjects.

With regards to the data analysis procedures, First, we analysed the quantitative data, followed by the qualitative data to cross validate the data, consolidate the findings, and to identify the coping strategies used by the students. The questionnaire consists of 33 items that are categorised according to the three main factors that lead to presentation anxiety in class which are mainly 1. Trait anxiety, 2. State anxiety, and 3. Situation-specific anxiety. Firstly, trait anxiety refers to having embarrassment and is associated with the fear of communicating with others, such as conducting discussions. Secondly, state anxiety is where a person feels anxious in the class. Thirdly, situation-specific anxiety refers to the anxiety of having to use second language in the class. The questionnaire sets were distributed to 60 participants who are ESL Malaysian Chinese undergraduate students to investigate their levels of presentation anxiety. In addition, Horwitz et al. (1986) further noted that the mean (m) when below 3, it illustrates that the individual is less anxious, if m is around 3, it displays a slight anxiety among them, when m is at 4 or above, it represents that the student experiences decent anxiety. Furthermore, three categories are classified in order to determine the anxiety level among the participants – high level anxiety (HLA), average level anxiety (ALA), and low level anxiety (LLA). Each of the items from the questionnaire were classified into three groups-

high level anxiety (HLA), average level anxiety (ALA), and low level anxiety (LLA). According to Hwa and Peck (2017), from the scale in the questionnaire, ranging from 33 to 160 points, HLA exists when participants score more than 128 points, ALA exists when participants score a range between 96 to 128 points, whilst LLA exists when participants score less than 96 points.

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Findings and Discussion of Quantitative Data

To address the first research objective, which is related to the levels of presentation anxiety identified among undergraduate Malaysian Chinese students in UCSI university, the descriptive analysis has revealed that 36 participants (60%) possessed a moderate level of English presentation anxiety. While only 1 participant (1%) experienced high level of English presentation anxiety and another 23 participants (38.3%) have a low level of English presentation anxiety. The following sub-headings further discuss the results obtained from state anxiety (communication apprehension), situation-specific anxiety (test anxiety), and trait anxiety (fear of negative evaluation).

5.1.1 State Anxiety (Communication Apprehension)

The results for the state anxiety have shown that the feeling of a lack of preparation before doing English presentations is identified from Item 16 (Even if I am well prepared for the presentation in English class, I still feel anxious about it.) which has the highest mean value ($m=3.43$). On the contrary, Item 3 (I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English class.) has the lowest mean value ($m=2.62$). This indicates that the participants experienced lesser anxiety when they are being called by their lecturers to participate in English classes. Table 1 below illustrates the results for the state anxiety in the communication apprehension items in the ELCAS from the participants. In addition, the items in this table are arranged from the highest to the lowest mean of total score in ELCAS.

Table 1: Mean Results of State Anxiety Items in ELCAS

| Item | Statement | Mean |
|------|--|------|
| 16 | Even if I am well prepared for the presentation in English class, I still feel anxious about it. | 3.43 |
| 22 | I <i>don't</i> feel pressure to prepare very well for English classes. | 3.38 |
| 9 | I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class. | 3.17 |
| 6 | During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course. | 3.02 |

| | | |
|----|--|------|
| 30 | I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language. | 3.00 |
| 24 | I feel very self-conscious about speaking English language in front of other students. | 2.98 |
| 2 | I <i>don't</i> worry about making mistakes in English presentation classes. | 2.95 |
| 13 | It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class. | 2.88 |
| 20 | I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class. | 2.83 |
| 1 | I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English presentation class. | 2.80 |
| 4 | It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English. | 2.75 |
| 12 | In English class, I can get so nervous I forget things that I know. | 2.72 |
| 3 | I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English class. | 2.62 |

5.1.2 Situation-Specific Anxiety (Test Anxiety)

For the situation-specific anxiety, it is observed that Item 5 (It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.) holds the highest mean value ($m=3.78$). This indicates that the students experienced a moderate level of anxiety when they are required to take more foreign language classes or taking English tests in class. Moreover, for this category, Salehi and Marefat (2014) claimed that students who possess a high level of test anxiety tend to experience a high level of language or presentation anxiety. However, the participants who fall under this category have shown a positive influence as they neutrally agree to participate in class, and contented to take extra language classes, and they were at ease on taking English tests in English classes. However, Item 27 (I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English classes.) holds the lowest mean value ($m=2.62$) which shows that the participants experienced a low level of anxiety when they are required to speak up in their English classes. From the results above, Situation-Specific Anxiety (Test Anxiety) showed that even though students were unconfident in speaking the English language in particular situations, but they were still motivated and vigorous to take up extra language classes. This finding is also consistent with that of James et al. (2020) whereby ESL students were aware that their English competency was slightly weaker compared to other students in the class; however, they did not mind in taking and attending extra language classes to improve this skill. Table 2 displays the results of the situation-specific anxiety in the test anxiety items in ELCAS from the participants who took part in ELCAS. All the items are arranged from the highest to the lowest mean value.

Table 2: *Mean Results of Test Anxiety Items in ELCAS*

| Items | Statement | Mean |
|-------|---|------|
| 5 | It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes. | 3.78 |
| 8 | I am usually at ease during tests in my English class. | 3.68 |
| 18 | I feel confident when I speak in English-based class. | 3.43 |
| 14 | I would <i>not</i> be nervous speaking the English language with native speakers. | 3.42 |
| 32 | I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the English language. | 3.37 |
| 31 | I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the English language. | 2.63 |
| 27 | I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English classes. | 2.62 |

5.1.3 Trait Anxiety (*Fear of Negative Evaluation*)

For the trait anxiety, it is observed that Item 28 of the questionnaire (When I'm on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed.) has the highest mean value ($m=3.55$) for this category. This displays that the participants have experienced a moderate level of anxiety when they are on their way to join in their English classes, in which they averagely feel confident and calm to join the class. Rodrigues (2020) stated that trait anxiety has higher tendency to last longer compared to other anxiety types for students as the existing anxiety is often driven by external factors such as a positive environment would lead students to join in for classes. Similarly, for Item 17 (I often feel like not going to my English classes.) holds the lowest mean value ($m=2.02$) which indicates that the participants feel self-assured to join their English classes and they enjoy participating in their English classes. As we can see that the results from trait anxiety (fear of negative evaluation), male students experienced more anxiety compared to female students. This result further contradicts with previous studies which have suggested that females have resulted in a higher score in trait anxiety (fear of negative evaluation) in the scale compared to males (Marx, 2019; Hwa & Peck, 2017). Thus, it can be said that not only female ESL students, but male ESL students would also experience anxiety of having the fear of negative evaluation by their peers and lecturers in their English presentations. The mean results of trait anxiety items in ELCAS are presented in Table 3 below. The highest mean value is presented at the top of the table while the lowest mean value is presented at the bottom of the table.

Table 3: *Mean Results of Trait Anxiety Items in ELCAS*

| Items | Statement | Mean |
|-------|---|------|
| 28 | When I'm on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed. | 3.55 |
| 23 | I always feel that other students speak the English language better than I do. | 3.47 |
| 7 | I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am. | 3.40 |
| 33 | I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance. | 3.38 |
| 11 | I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language class. | 3.32 |
| 29 | I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says. | 3.22 |
| 15 | I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting. | 3.15 |
| 10 | I worry about the consequences of failing my English class. | 3.00 |
| 19 | I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make. | 2.85 |
| 25 | The pace of English classes moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind. | 2.58 |
| 26 | I feel more tense and nervous in English-speaking classes than other classes. | 2.25 |
| 21 | The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get. | 2.22 |
| 17 | I often feel like not going to my English classes. | 2.02 |

Moreover, in terms of gender, it is indicated that female students experienced presentation anxiety under state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety categories compared to male students ($m=3.03$ and $m=3.21$). On the contrary, under trait anxiety category, it is observed that males experience more presentation anxiety compared to female ($m=2.97$). Hence, we have analysed three levels of anxiety among ESL undergraduate Malaysian Chinese students in the study whereby the students suffer a moderate level of anxiety in terms of State Anxiety (Communication Apprehension), Situation-Specific Anxiety (Test Anxiety), and Trait Anxiety (Fear of Negative Evaluation). This finding is line with several past studies which also found out that ESL students experienced a moderate level of presentation anxiety

in the class (Marx, 2019; Alghazo & Al-Wadi, 2019; Abbasi, Ahmed, Farooqi, & John, 2019; Sadiq, 2017; Hwa & Peck, 2017; Gopang, Bughio, Umrani, & Lohar, 2015).

5.2 Findings and Discussion of Qualitative Data

A total of six main themes is derived from the six interviewees which are '*Nervous when using English to present in the class*', '*Lack of preparation before the English presentation*', '*Afraid of making mistakes during the presentation*', '*Worried of being judged by lecturers or students*', '*lecturers having high expectations from presenters*', and '*fear of failing the course*'. The two themes, '*Nervous when using English to present in the class*' and '*Afraid of making mistakes during the presentation*' have the highest frequency whereby all the interviewees have commented that they feel nervous when they are required to speak English in the class, and they feel pressured to make mistakes during their oral presentations. Whilst the theme of '*Lack of preparation before the English presentation*' is the lowest frequency with only one interviewee responded that he did not prepare adequately before his English presentation. Table 4 below displays the six main theme derived from the six interviewees.

Table 4: Six main themes of factors that caused presentation anxiety among students

| Theme Number | Themes |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | Nervous when using English to present in the class |
| 2 | Lack of preparation before the English presentation |
| 3 | Afraid of making mistakes during the presentation |
| 4 | Worried of being judged by lecturer or students |
| 5 | Lecturers having high expectations for presenters |
| 6 | Fear of failing the course |

From the results above, it is reported that the themes derived in the current study have aligned with the study by James et al. (2020) whereby their study has also drawn themes from the factors of presentation anxiety. Their themes derived are '*confused when speaking English in class*', '*Speaking without preparation*', '*Feeling afraid when making mistakes*', '*comparison to other classmates*', '*Perception of grammatical rules*', and '*Failing Basic English class*' which are similar to our findings. Furthermore, the participants in this study with low motivation, nervousness, and low confidence to participate in presentations have shown a similar pattern with the study done by Soomro et al. (2019) among 100 Engineering undergraduate students in Pakistan. They found out that students experienced oral presentation anxiety in the class due to a lack of oral presentation skills and thus lowering their self-esteem, demotivated and unconfident to present in the class. This finding further indicated that presentation skills among

ESL students is vital towards their language learning process as Soomro et al. (2019) claimed that having adequate presentation skills before entering a professional level of study can further boost students learning environment.

5.3 Coping Strategies Results

To further address the second research objective, which is to identify the strategies that are used to cope by undergraduate Malaysian Chinese students with English-speaking anxiety. From the coping strategies provided by each of the interviewee, several themes emerged from the interview conducted such as *'to rehearse'*, *'relaxation'*, *'to enquire'*, *'self-evaluation'*, *'self-interaction'*, *'self-help'*, and *'focus-shifting'*. Moreover, the results from coping strategies that provided by the interviewees in this study were in line with several past studies regarding each coping strategy used by ESL students to cope with presentation anxiety (James et al., 2020; Tati et al., 2016). They found out that ESL undergraduate Malaysian students often utilize both internal help (self-study) and external help (friends and lecturers) to further mitigate their presentation anxiety. Moreover, James et al. (2020) elaborated that students would tend to seek help from peers or lecturers who are more proficient with the language. As seeking external help such as consulting friends or lecturers would tend to initiate self-interaction and also eventually boost students' confidence to seek guidance from their friends or lecturers on the meaning of certain words and have the initiative to learn how to speak well during English presentations (Tati et al., 2016).

6.0 CONCLUSION

It is noted that ESL students in Malaysia could hardly master the English language proficiently, and by knowing some English vocabulary does not qualify a person to claim the status of ESL (Iber, 2016). Tati et al. (2016) elaborated this issue that language anxiety plays a negative role for ESL learners due to the lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary knowledge and getting nervous when speaking English, and hence, leading to students to possess less motivation to have effective communications and participation in the class.

The study utilized the framework of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986) to identify the levels of presentation anxiety among the participants in the quantitative phase of the study. It was found out that a moderate level of anxiety exists among ESL undergraduate Malaysian Chinese students despite the differences in the nature of the course across the faculty departments. The students experience presentation anxiety mainly because of certain factors such as the lack of confidence to speak English, lack of competence in English, having to fulfil high expectations from their language teachers, fear of failing the course, and fear of negative evaluations from their peers and

lecturers. Thus, these factors contribute to ESL Malaysian Chinese students' presentation anxiety in the class. Moreover, the two major themes derived from interviews such as '*Nervous when using English to present in the class*' and '*Afraid of making mistakes during the presentation*' show the highest frequency. This indicates that students commonly feel nervous when they are required to speak English in class, and they are pressured and thus making mistakes during their presentation. Hence, students tend to do frequent pre-rehearsals at home as part of their coping strategies before their presentation.

Overall, one can conclude that both the quantitative and qualitative results of this study help students and lecturers to understand and overcome different kinds of possibilities that ultimately contribute to language learning anxiety in the class. Both quantitative and qualitative results in this study supported each other and it is confirmed that students would still remain nervous during their oral presentations even they have prepared well beforehand. It can be concluded that the existence of presentation anxiety is unavoidable, and guidance from the respective lecturers is crucial in order to improve students' oral skills.

For the implications of the study, we suggest that students who experience presentation anxiety can help themselves by opening up to share their difficulties with their peers and lecturers in order to alleviate their speaking anxiety. Practice and rehearsals beforehand are strongly encouraged as this would help to boost students' confidence when doing presentations in the class. Moreover, language teachers or lecturers can help students by having a positive learning environment, such as giving guidance to those who possess weaker speaking skills to reach the expectations through providing a positive attitude in the class and giving activities such as impromptu speeches or a sharing session in the class so that students can alleviate and strengthen their English speaking skills. In addition, the study is highly replicable whereby there is a need to conduct research derived from this theoretical framework by Horwitz et al. (1986), as the questionnaire can be applied to any other languages in terms of measuring language anxiety.

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