

Analysis of Chinese EFL Postgraduates' Experiences with Public Speaking Anxiety toward International Conference Presentation

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Abstract

Anxiety has a significant effect on oral communication, particularly when it occurs in the form of a public address. The quality of a public speaker's oral presentation may highly be determined by a variety of emotive elements. However, this has received much too little attention in the realm of academic conference presentations, despite the fact that this process may be incredibly nerve-wracking for both novice and experienced postgraduate students. In the current study, 137 Chinese EFL postgraduate students consented to complete a revamped version of the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA). Chinese EFL postgraduates reported a high level of public speaking anxiety during their international conference presentations, as measured by three categorical variables: public speaking apprehension, self-behavior management, and fear of negative evaluation. During the international conference presentations, ten questionnaire items were recognised to be the most anxiety-provoking conditions in terms of public speaking anxiety. In addition, differences in gender and graduate study specialization were not significantly associated with Chinese EFL postgraduates' experiences with public speaking anxiety. Nevertheless, it was discovered that Chinese EFL graduate students reported statistically significant levels of public speaking anxiety, and pedagogical suggestions were offered.

Keywords: Chinese EFL postgraduates, foreign language anxiety, international conference, public speaking anxiety

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

Unquestionably, English is now characterized as a globally utilized and recognized universal language. There is a developing necessity for the availability and usage of English in our everyday interactions. Additionally, in all spheres of life, including academia, international commerce, politics, and economics, English is an indispensable ingredient for information interchange (Chmarkh, 2022; Doff, 2018; Ahn, 2015). In this scenario, studying English as a foreign language (EFL) is paramount, particularly whenever applied to other facets of our lives. Clearly, the acquisition of adequate English proficiency has been seen as a requirement for both individuals who strive to be competitively driven in their employability and those who are likely to flourish in the academic realm (Mustapha & Mahmoud, 2019; Hadijah & Shalawati, 2019; Noviyenty, 2017). In particular, Chinese EFL international postgraduates pursuing higher education overseas would employ English as a medium of academic communication in the circumstances of higher education (Liu, 2022; Huang, 2021; Jiang & Kosar-Altinyelken, 2020; Qiang, 2017; Qiang, 2015). Students who aspire to careers as competent professional speakers or presenters of academic subjects would be well-served to devote a significant amount of time to developing their communication and presentation skills via extensive participation in a huge assortment of speaking and presenting opportunities (Satullaeva & Kurbanbaeva, 2020; Pecorari, 2018; Zhang & Sung, 2013; Pan, 2014).

However, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) observed that communicating in the target language appears to be the most intimidating component of acquiring a foreign language. Besides that, as per several researchers' demonstration, foreign language anxiety is a tremendous problem and mostly a harmful effect that might potentially hinder a person's foreign language (FL) acquisition (Alqurashi & Althubaiti, 2021; Cui, 2020; Alaleh, 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is evidently identified as substantial and prominent in determining the foreign language accomplishment of EFL learners, notably in speaking abilities and communicating competence in formalized and professional academic settings (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Fujii,

2021; Effiong, 2015). In contrast, Kiae et al. (2021) claimed that English language anxiety represents a variety of social anxiety based on interactions with other individuals. Meanwhile, Kruk (2018) argued that a particular instructor, group of learners, or foreign context is likely to induce language anxiety. Consequently, language anxiety arises not just during language acquisition but also in social situations. In addition, it was believed and reported that anxiety correlated adversely to an individual's emotional filter, rendering them less receptive to verbal information (Joyce-Deaulieu & Zaboski, 2020; Rachman, 2020; Kiel & Kalomiris, 2019; Waston & O'Hara, 2017). It would appear that the phrases foreign language anxiety and EFL students' learning are directly relevant. FLA is a far-reaching concern that must be tackled in order to facilitate the learning process in a more productive manner, primarily in the professional performances of Chinese EFL postgraduates at international conferences, academic symposiums, seminars, workshops etc, requiring public speaking or communication skills. With this in mind, Numerous individuals may be apprehensive about speaking in public if they experience anxiety. According to Güvendir et al. (2020), Mehrpoor and Soeimani (2018) and Genc et al. (2016), those who are deceptive, inattentive, and incommunicative are incompetent. Anxiety over public speaking impacts a person's social, economic, political, and intellectual aspects of life (Güvendir et al., 2020; Elani-Shirvan & Talebzadeh, 2020). Uncontrolled public speaking anxiety has damaging consequences on a person's quality of life, career, and critical thinking. Coppinger and Sheridan (2022) indicated that students with public speaking anxiety express insights, projects, and facts shabbily and inappropriately. Therefore, as the intention of this study, it is vital to analyze how FLA affects the international conference presentations of Chinese EFL postgraduates.

1.2 Research Objectives

In view of concerns about the impact of FLA on the presenting performance of Chinese EFL postgraduates at the international conference, the principal aim of this study was to evaluate Chinese EFL postgraduates' foreign language anxiety experiences at the international conference. The second objective was to explore the link between gender difference and foreign language anxiety. The ultimate goal was to look into the relationship between conference presenting settings and foreign language anxiety.

1.3 Research Questions

In this research, emphasis was placed on the perceptions of Chinese EFL postgraduates with regard to their experiences and sentiments of FLA while attending and giving a presentation at the international conference. As a result, in an effort to get an in-depth understanding of the function that FLA serves in the acquisition of foreign languages, the following three investigation questions were posed:

- 1) How much public speaking anxiety do Chinese EFL postgraduates suffer during their international conference presentations?
- 2) Based on gender disparities, are there substantial variances in public speaking anxiety experiences of Chinese EFL postgraduates?
- 3) Based on various graduate study majors, are there noticeable differences in public speaking anxiety experiences of Chinese EFL postgraduates?

1.4 Significance of the Study

In recent decades, language anxiety has been addressed in great detail, as a growing number of relevant research has been done. It has had a direct impact on foreign language learning, language performance, and perhaps even long-term language proficiency (Chmarkh, 2022; Alqurashi & Althubaiti, 2021; Cui, 2020; Doff, 2018; Alaleh, 2018). This study was conducted to acquire a deeper understanding of the situation, especially as it pertains to the foreign language anxiety suffered by Chinese EFL postgraduates during their international conference presentations. Studies addressing this subject have been seldom conducted if at all. Ultimately, the outcomes of this study could supply EFL students and instructors in postgraduate programs with clarity and background information. Identifying the extent to which Chinese EFL postgraduates suffer from foreign language apprehension might aid in addressing this sensation. For instance, a postgraduate individual's academic language growth and presenting performance may be significantly impacted by foreign language anxiety.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Anxiety—Psychological Disorder

Multiple dictionary definitions describe anxiety as the condition of feeling apprehensive or terrified that maybe something unpleasant may transpire, or a sensation of tension and concern about something (Merriam-Webster, 2019; Pearson Education, 2014; Oxford University Press, 2011). Moreover, Alnahidh and Altalhab (2020) termed anxiety as "the subjective sensation of tension, apprehension, uneasiness, and concern connected with an

activation of the autonomic nervous system." From such a psychological standpoint, it is evident that anxiety would be regarded as a specific emotional disorder that has a detrimental effect on human conduct as the substantial focus of this research (Coppinger & Sheridan, 2022; Kiae et al., 2021). On the other hand, psychologists endeavour to classify anxiety into a variety of subtypes, including trait anxiety and transitory anxiety state. Attribute anxiety is theoretically viewed as a generally constant personality trait whereas state anxiety based on the perspectives of considerable researchers relates to the moment-to-moment feeling of apprehension (Joyce-Deaulieu & Zabolski, 2020; Rachman, 2020; Kiel & Kalomiris, 2019).

In addition, He (2018) and Mierzwa (2019) broaden state anxiety as a responsiveness to a specific anxiety-inducing stimuli as a significant test. Accordingly, language learners with high trait anxiety are prone to be anxious individuals with impaired emotional well-being, maturity and stability (Schalley & Eisenchlas, 2020). Furthermore, Horwitz and Young (1991) postulated a second form of apprehension: situation-specific apprehension. They asserted that situation-specific anxiousness, theoretically stated, seems to be a present-moment feeling after investigating numerous anxiety research areas. In other words, learners with innately unique personalities are most likely to place less emphasis on the situational causes of anxiety since anxiety is a distinguishing trait of an individual across many circumstances, scenarios, or occasions (Narcy-Combes et al., 2019). In the preceding part, the researcher provided a conceptual and basic review of three categories of anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situational anxiety with reference to anxiety as a psychological concept. Clearly, anxiety serves an exceptionally crucial role throughout each dimension. Nevertheless, this study on anxiety prediction in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context concentrated primarily on foreign language anxiety. In light of this, the succeeding section should provide a more in-depth explanation of anxiety in an EFL setting from the viewpoint of students.

2.2 Anxiety in Foreign Language

According to Horwitz and Young's (1991) interpretation, language anxiety could be classified as a feature of language acquisition that causes panic in language learners. All language learners potentially suffer from anxiety or discomfort throughout the process of language acquisition, which, as shown by the study findings (Gkonou et al., 2017; Salehi & Marefat, 2014), may exert a notable impact on language acquisition. Additionally, as per Gregersen and Mercer (2021), anxiety manifests as a sense of dread, a nebulous fear indirectly related with an objective. For this reason, anxiety is considered a hindrance as referring to language learners' accomplishment of a high degree of competency in a foreign language (Dewaele & Li, 2021). As a consequence, it is clearly proven that language anxiety performs a contribution comparable to one of the greatest indicators of language acquisition achievement (Satullaeva & Kurbanbaeva, 2020; Pecorari, 2018). In the next part, however, a wealth of study findings establishes unequivocally the presence of anxiety in foreign language learning.

In terms of psychology, foreign language anxiety may be theoretically defined as the tense and apprehensive sentiments of language learners, as well as their attitudes in foreign language environments (Cui, 2020; Doff, 2018). Anxiety, as a psychological condition, is characterized by a subjective experience of discontent, tension, uneasiness, and concern that is accompanied by an activation of the autonomic nervous system (Pecorari, 2018; Alaleh, 2018). In theory, it would be evident that language learners with anxiety-related difficulties might possibly encounter uncertainty in particular situations or scenarios in which the ability to speak a second or foreign language seems necessary and required.

Moreover, based upon the study findings of Gok et al. (2021), shaking, uneasiness, a rapid pulse, distraction, forgetfulness, profuse perspiration, palpitations, and sleep disorders are regarded to be the diagnostic hallmarks of anxious learners. Given the adverse consequences of foreign language anxiety, the language proficiency of these language learners would certainly become unbalanced in this scenario. In response to certain potential triggers for language learning anxiety, certain research findings have underlined situation-specific anxiety that could be conscientiously perceived and discerned in a language-use setting (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2018; Vahedi & Fatemi, 2015), thereby extending the attention toward some other scope of language anxiety—EFL setting anxiety or anxiety in public occasions such as academic international conferences or public speaking anxiety.

2.3 Anxiety for Public Settings/Speaking

Stage fright of public speaking is one of the most prevalent forms of social anxiety and a component of social anxiety. Public speaking anxiety has therefore been a form of communication trepidation or communication anxiety according to Dewaele and Moskowitz (2020). The type of communication at consideration is public speaking. Whenever a person with anxiety presents in public is either requested to speak in public, they suffer from nervousness, uneasiness, anxiety, apprehension, and fear of making blunders. Public speaking anxiety is identified as following categories, including internal discomfort, communication avoidance, withdrawal and

abundant communication (Attanayake, 2019; Aydin, 2017). To put it another way, an individual has public speaking anxiety when he or she doubts his or her capabilities to manage the speaking circumstances he or she is confronting and, as a consequence, has been unable to concentrate and becomes agitated. Numerous studies have shown that a person with great self-confidence and very limited public speaking anxiety seems to be the exact opposite (Dastgoshadeh & Javanmardi, 2021; Al-Khotaba et al., 2019; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017).

Each one of us needs effective communication abilities in today's society. Motorchi and Ziafar (2020) assert that communication has become a hallmark of social cohesiveness, social standing, and professional characteristics, and the majority of language components are acquired via this medium. During their careers, professionals are mandated to deliver several lectures to a variety of audiences. If individuals experience public speaking anxiety, their occupations may be jeopardized as a result. Some studies show that social anxiety is associated with variance in audience response, and this impacts confidence and public speaking (Rubio, 2020; Amalia et al., 2019; Szyszka, 2016). In Su's (2022) study, she reports that 72% of EFL individuals have minor or considerable public speaking fear among Chinese college students. Four individuals out of ten dread public speaking more than death. Most psychologists see it as an irrational and easily overcome phobia. Moreover, students should possess the essential skill of public speaking in order to convey ideas or make suggestions. Many individuals dread speaking in public. Shen (2021) points out that anxiety produces anxiousness and evasive actions that impede scholastic achievement and performance. In accordance with the NIMH San Francisco, 69% of the global population exhibits public speaking anxiety (Hope et al., 2019). Per the research performed by Li and Deawele (2021), 77% of Chinese college students report nervousness over little or large-scale public speaking, which matched up the research results in the study performed by Qu (2019), 75% of Chinese college students experience severe from public speaking anxiety. That is to say whenever offered the opportunity to speak in public, Chinese students often hesitate and feel uncertain. As individuals advance through their academic careers, they are much more inclined to speak and address at gatherings, symposia, and conferences, in addition to providing their perspective on the problems at hand, hence increasing the need for public speaking abilities. When speaking in front of an audience, however, some people experience restlessness and sleep difficulties owing to their public speaking anxiousness.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

This investigation was carried out with the engagement of one hundred thirty-seven master's degree students of Chinese nationality (N=137; Male = 76, 55.5%; Female=61, 44.5%). These postgraduate students were mandated to participate in a university-sponsored yearly basis international conference to present their research articles pertaining to their final master's thesis. In the meantime, these postgraduates in terms of their master's degree professionally earned the degree in MBA (Master of Business Administration, N=46; 33.5%), MEA (Master of Educational Administration, N=62; 45.3%), and MFA (Master of Finance Administration, N=29; 21.2%). Table 1 provides a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Summary of Research Participants' Demographic Information

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency (Count, N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	61	44.5%
	Male	76	55.5%
Master's Degree in	MEA	62	45.3%
	MBA	46	33.5%
	MFA	29	21.2%
Total		137	100%

Note: MEA (Master of Educational Administration); MBA (Master of Business Administration); MFA (Master of Finance Administration)

3.2 Research Instrument

The Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA), a 34-item scale devised by McCroskey (1970) to measure fear of public speaking, was utilized as the primary research instrument in the present study. Each item is graded on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (strongly agree). Original PRPSA comprises 22 questions to be phrased negatively, such as "I feel apprehensive while waiting to deliver my speech," and 12 items to be formulated positively, such as "I like preparing for a speech." In the

analysis of this data, the favorably worded questions of the PRPSA were turned then such high scores on the scale consistently indicated a greater level of public speaking anxiety. It has been shown that Cronbach's alpha for the scale ranges from 0.84 to 0.94, which means that the questionnaire has relatively high internal consistency (McCroskey 1970; Gufriyansyah & Khairani, 2019; Hope et al., 2019; Dueñas et al., 2018; Bartholomay & Houlihan, 2016;). In comparison, for the objective of the current study, the researcher adapted and amended the original version of the PRPSA by converting all 34 items into negative statements. In addition, the term "public speech" that was included in the original PRPSA has been changed to conference presentation. A fully altered version of PRPSA, containing all of the items, was constructed based on the following categorical factors: public speaking apprehension, self-control management, and fear of adverse assessment (see Table 2).

Table 2. Modified Version of Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety Scale

<i>Categorical Variable 1: Public Speaking Apprehension</i>
1. <i>My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a conference presentation</i>
2. <i>My hands tremble when I am giving a conference presentation</i>
3. <i>I feel agitated while giving a conference presentation</i>
4. <i>I am in constant fear of forgetting what I prepared to say during my conference presentation</i>
5. <i>I get anxious if someone asks me something about my topic knowledge that I don't know</i>
6. <i>My mind is uncertain when giving a conference presentation</i>
7. <i>My heart beats very fast just as I start a conference presentation</i>
8. <i>While giving a conference presentation, I feel troubled in control of my feelings of tension</i>
9. <i>When I make a mistake during my conference presentation, I find it hard to concentrate on the parts that follow</i>
10. <i>During my conference presentation, I experience a feeling of helplessness building up inside me</i>
11. <i>I feel shortness of breathing while I make a conference presentation</i>
12. <i>While giving a conference presentation, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know</i>
<i>Categorical Variable 2: Self-Behavior Management</i>
13. <i>While preparing for giving a conference presentation, I feel nervous</i>
14. <i>I feel tense when I see the words conference presentation</i>
15. <i>I feel worried when I am told to give a conference presentation</i>
16. <i>I am nervous just before starting a conference presentation, but I still do not feel calm during my presentation.</i>
17. <i>I seldom look forward to giving a conference presentation</i>
18. <i>I get anxious when I think about a conference presentation coming up</i>
19. <i>I always have some fear of giving a conference presentation</i>
20. <i>When the moderator announces my turn for conference presentation, I can feel myself getting tense</i>
21. <i>I do not enjoy preparing for a conference presentation</i>
22. <i>I do dread to give a conference presentation.</i>
23. <i>I perspire just before starting a conference presentation</i>
24. <i>Realizing that only a little time remains in a conference presentation makes me very anxious</i>
25. <i>I have trouble falling asleep the night before a conference presentation</i>
<i>Categorical Variable 2: Fear of Adverse Assessment</i>
26. <i>Right after giving a conference presentation I feel that I have had an unpleasant experience</i>
27. <i>I feel performing a poorer conference presentation because I am anxious</i>
28. <i>I feel anxious when the conference commentator announces the results of my conference presentation</i>
29. <i>I feel anxious during the process of waiting my conference presentation outcomes</i>
30. <i>I experience considerable anxiety while sitting in the conference room just after my conference presentation</i>
31. <i>I breathe faster just after finishing my conference presentation</i>
32. <i>I face the discouraged toward my giving of a conference presentation</i>
33. <i>I feel that I am losing the complete possession of myself after my conference presentation</i>
34. <i>I feel uncomfortable and tensioned in the hour or so just after finishing my conference presentation</i>

Adapted from McCroskey's (1970) version.

3.3 Pilot Test

The researcher implementing the Chinese version of the PRPSA recruited 50 graduate students at random to fill out the questionnaires for the pilot test in February 2021. After gathering all returned questionnaires, SPSS Statistics version 24.0 was employed to conduct a reliability analysis on the responses. The modified Chinese-version PRPSA in the pilot study, as presented in Table 3, indicated the internal reliability with an internal consistency coefficient of .853 (Cronbach's alpha, N = 34). Consequently, the modified Chinese-version of the PRPSA was perceived as a construct with promising validity and reliability across all 34 items.

Table 3. Pilot Test of the Adapted PRPSA

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized items	N of Items
.853	.829	34

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

This investigation was carried out throughout January and July of 2021. The researcher identified the list of postgraduate students in February 2021 whilst also gathering data. In that year, these postgraduates registered to attend the International Conference. In May of 2021, several postgraduates from three distinct master's programs attended the international conference. The researcher distributed the questionnaires on the day of the annual international conference, based on the list of presenters and their respective areas of expertise, immediately after their presentations. Each postgraduate participant devoted over 15 minutes filling out the questionnaire. All completed surveys were collected and then analyzed quantitatively.

4. Results

4.1 Notably High Level of Public Speaking Anxiety from Categorical Variables

SPSS version 24.0 was implemented in order to conduct a quantitative analysis upon every and each participant's responses to the 34 items that were included on the modified version of the PRPSA questionnaire. The results of each item are detailed in Table 4, along with its Mean (X) for all items and the average score for each categorical variable.

Table 4. Postgraduates' Experience with Public Speaking Anxiety toward International Conference Presentation

Categorical Variable 1: <i>Public Speaking Apprehension</i>			Categorical Variable 2: <i>Self-Behavior Management</i>			Categorical Variable 3: <i>Fear of Adverse Assessment</i>		
item	N	Mean	item	N	Mean	item	N	Mean
1	137	3.87	13	137	4.55	26	137	4.11
2	137	4.21	14	137	4.18	27	137	4.27
3	137	4.33	15	137	4.09	28	137	4.45
4	137	3.95	16	137	4.11	29	137	4.57
5	137	4.87	17	137	4.68	30	137	4.06
6	137	4.55	18	137	4.47	31	137	3.97
7	137	3.62	19	137	4.36	32	137	4.06
8	137	4.39	20	137	4.16	33	137	4.22
9	137	4.58	21	137	3.76	34	137	4.27
10	137	4.13	22	137	4.20			
11	137	4.02	23	137	4.33			
12	137	4.36	24	137	4.89			
			25	137	4.69			
<i>Averaged Score:</i>		4.24	<i>Averaged Score:</i>		4.32	<i>Averaged Score:</i> 4.22		
<i>Total Averaged Score based on all categorical variables:</i>						4.26		

Table 4 reveals that, in response to the first research question, "How much public speaking anxiety do Chinese EFL postgraduates suffer during their international conference presentation?", participants in this study reported

on average ($X = 4.26$), a significantly high degree of public speaking anxiety. In addition, based on categorical factors including public speaking apprehension ($X=4.24$), self-behavior management ($X=4.32$), and fear of adverse assessment ($X=4.22$), postgraduates also showed considerable degree of public speaking anxiety during the international conference presentation. Furthermore, the results suggest that among 34 items, 10 had the greatest level of postgraduates' experiences with public speaking anxiety, as shown in Table 5:

Table 5. Items with the Highest Level of Public Speaking Anxiety toward Conference Presentation

Categorical Variables	Item	Mean
Public Speaking Apprehension	Item 5: I get anxious if someone asks me something about my topic knowledge that I do not know	4.87
	Item 6: My mind is uncertain when giving a conference presentation	4.55
	Item 9: When I make a mistake during my conference presentation, I find it hard to concentrate on the parts that follow	4.58
Self-Behavior Management	Item 13: While preparing for giving a conference presentation, I feel nervous	4.55
	Item 17: I seldom look forward to giving a conference presentation	4.68
	Item 18: I get anxious when I think about a conference presentation coming up	4.47
	Item 24: Realizing that only a little time remains in a conference presentation makes me very anxious	4.89
Fear of Adverse Assessment	Item 25: I have trouble falling asleep the night before a conference presentation	4.69
	Item 28: I feel anxious when the conference commentator announces the results of my conference presentation	4.45
	Item 29: I feel anxious during the process of waiting my conference presentation outcomes	4.57

Note: Items with the greatest degree of PSA have mean scores that exceed or are close to 4.50

4.2 Gender Disparities and Public Speaking Anxiety

In response to the second research question, which was "based on gender disparities, are there substantial variances in public speaking anxiety experiences of Chinese EFL postgraduates," the result of the t-test for all participants ($N=137$) in Table 6 demonstrates that there was no statistically significant difference at the .05 level of significance between Chinese EFL postgraduates' gender differences and public speaking anxiety toward international conference presentation ($F=.574$, $p>.05$). This was shown by the fact that there was no significant correlation between gender differences and Chinese EFL postgraduates' experiences of public speaking anxiety toward international conference presentation.

Table 6. Gender Differences & Chinese EFL Postgraduates' Experiences of PSA toward Conference Presentation

t-test						
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference						
	Mean	SD	Lower	Upper	T	P: Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	.08254	.99758	-.49765	.38739	-.407	.574*
Female						

Notes: The test value is significant at the 0.05 level

4.3 Graduate Study Major Difference and Public Speaking Anxiety

In order to answer the third research question, which would have been "based on various graduate study majors, are there noticeable differences in public speaking anxiety experiences of Chinese EFL postgraduates," depending on Chinese major differences of EFL postgraduates, in Table 7, the outcomes of the t-test for all respondents ($N=137$) revealed that no statistically significant difference at the .05 level of significance was found between Chinese EFL postgraduates' major differences and their experiences of public speaking anxiety over the international conference presentation ($F=.390$, $p>.05$).

Table 7. Gender Differences & Chinese EFL Postgraduates' Experiences of PSA toward Conference Presentation

t-test						
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference						
	Mean	SD	Lower	Upper	t	P: Sig. (2-tailed)
MBA						
MEA	-.04105	.37084	-.29765	.08421	-.647	.390*
MFA						

Notes: The test value is significant at the 0.05 level

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The objective of the current study was to identify and examine Chinese EFL postgraduates' experiences with public speaking anxiety in relation to international conference presentations. Take together, the current empirical study results provide insights for the usefulness in expanding our understanding of Chinese EFL postgraduates' experiences with high degree of public speaking anxiety toward international conference presentations found within all categorical variables, including public speaking apprehension, self-behavior management and fear of adverse assessment. Alberth (2022) defines the notion underlying apprehension or context-specific nervousness as frequently being tied to a specific scenario in which the speaker would use a second language in which he or she is not entirely capable. Students of Asian descent may experience embarrassment while expressing themselves in English. Particularly, Confucian philosophy may impact and encourage faultless performance among Chinese students (Tang, 2022; Zheng & Cheng, 2018; Yin & Wang, 2017). Students in China are worried about making errors and being ridiculed, which made them seriously apprehensive while speaking in public (Zheng & Cheng, 2018; Shao et al., 2013). By extension, speaking in front of a group or the general public has been a communication and language challenge for a very long time. Students eschewed public speaking due to embarrassment, trembling voices, quick pulse, feelings of discomfort, inferiority complex, and lack of self-respect (Gok et al., 2021; Güvendir et al., 2020; Gkonou et al., 2017). To put it another way, giving speeches and presentations in classrooms and in front of an audience has been a significant obstacle for them. Communication apprehension is a form of shyness characterized by an anxiety-driven dread of speaking with others while apprehension about communication has also been categorized as audience-based apprehension, context-based apprehension, and situational apprehension (Joyce-Beaulieu & Zabolski, 2020). Problems with expressing in groups (verbal communication anxiety), in public (performance anxiety or stage fright), or in listening to or learning through spoken foreign language message (recipient anxiety) may be considered indications or signs of public communication anxiety (Hope et al., 2019; Hope, 2018).

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that variations in gender and graduate major appear not to have a substantial impact on Chinese EFL postgraduates' experiences with public speaking anxiety prior to international conference presentations. However, the new results seem to contradict prior research which revealed a positive correlation between gender and public speaking anxiety but still no significant gender effect on public speaking (German, 2020; Lestari et al., 2017; Elmenfi & Gaibani, 2016). The probable causes of these disparate outcomes may be somewhat attributable to the varying levels of engagement and academic settings used to evaluate learners' public speaking anxiety. In those earlier investigations, the researchers recruited college-level EFL students as their participants. However, in the present study, the majority of learners were Chinese EFL postgraduates. Students may exhibit a variety of reactions to public speaking concerns based on their educational abilities and level of maturity (Russell, 2020; Buckley, 2018; Hope et al., 2019). The current study, on the other hand, focused on the experiences of Chinese EFL postgraduates with public speaking anxiety in reference to the international conference presentation in public, which differentiated from the general classroom setting of those preceding studies. In other words, communication in English for professional and academic purposes in a large, public academic context, such as an international conference, may vary dramatically from that in an English as a Foreign Language classroom with a small, comfortable audience. On the other hand, due to the scarcity of relevant studies and literature concerning different educational backgrounds or experiences, there will be a pressing need for more investigation into the diverse majors of graduate study as the primary distinction.

6. Implication

The current research, in need of further investigation, has thrown up many issues related to Chinese EFL postgraduates' experiences with public speaking anxiety toward international conference presentations. In light of this, the need for academic public speaking abilities is also on the increase, since as academic individuals or

professionals advance in their careers, they are more likely to deliver and engage in conversation for all forms of potential academic scenarios in the future, in addition to offering their opinion on the topics at hand. Whenever speaking in front of an audience, however, some people may undergo sleep disorders, agitation, and other negative emotional responses owing to their public speaking phobia. Different studies have investigated the roots and grounds of public speaking anxiety and conducted extensive ideas and techniques to cope with and conquer this issue. Hence, further research should be usefully explored and investigated into the technique being used to overcome fear of academic public speaking for graduates, and this skill should be included in the course plan or learning objectives to better graduate academic achievement.

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