

EXAMINING IRANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' LEVEL OF ORAL COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION IN DIFFERENT SOCIAL CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine Iranian higher education English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' level of oral communication apprehension in different social communication contexts. This study was a quantitative and qualitative study using experimental data analysis and interview. The quantitative hypothesis assumed that higher education EFL learners differ in the level of Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA), especially in different communication contexts. Concerning qualitative analysis students' source of OCA was examined through interview. To do the study, 50 students in TEFL from Islamic Azad University of Karaj were selected for the study. Participants answered McCroskey's PRCA-24 Questionnaire to examine their level of OCA in four contexts namely classroom presentation, meeting, group discussion and conversation. Respecting, qualitative analysis 10 students were selected randomly from the entire 50 students. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to explore the source of OCR in the four contexts. Data of experimental study was analyzed using SPSS 20.0, and result showed that 12% of undergraduate students were recorded with high level of OCA, 34% with average level and 54% with low level of OCA, and with 95% confident ($p=0.015 < 0.05$) there was a significant difference between undergraduate students' level of OCA. Regarding four different communication contexts only in the case of conversation context ($p= 0.009 < 0.05$) there was a significant difference between student' level of OCA. In addition, the result of interview or qualitative study indicated that the source of OCA can be explained as formality, subordinate, unfamiliarity, and novelty. It was determined that qualitative analysis supports the result of quantitative analysis regarding sources of oral communication apprehension.

KEYTERMS: Oral Communication Apprehension, communication contexts, classroom presentation, meeting, group discussion, conversation

INTRODUCTION

Second language communication is the main goal of learners whose focus is to use language in social contexts. English language is the first language of several countries including US, Britain, Australia, and Canada... and used as second language in most of the countries. It is uses globally for daily negotiations, public relations and social networking. Accordingly communicative competence in English language is an important skill and asset for everyone. Communication in a foreign language is not an easy task for everyone and some learners may encounter communication problems such as communication apprehension which is perceived as "a level of fear or anxiety associated with the real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). In some scholars, communication

apprehension refers to feeling of discomfort or fear syndrome which is experienced in relation to either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (Powers & Smythe, 1980; McCroskey, 1984).

Kathleen Simons, Mark Higgins and Dana Lowe (1995) claimed that behavioral and pedagogical approaches can reduce oral communication apprehension. Behavioral approach considered physiological and more personal aspect of apprehension, but pedagogical approach focuses on communication tasks and situations which reduce the apprehension by concentrating on communication competence. Based on pedagogical approach oral communication apprehension and communication skills must be considered as two separate aspects. Some students may avoid communication situations for lack of linguistic and communicative skills while others may have a good command of communication skills but certain situations generate anxiety for them (Baldwin et al., 1983).

Learning English as a foreign language starts formally in Iranian educational system from the first year of junior high school. However, most of the students attend private English language classes out of school. Dominant teaching methods of teaching English are different at and out of school. Speaking and listening skills are mostly put away in high schools due to limited class times and lack of required facilities. Therefore, speaking and listening skills become one of the most challenging and stressful aspects of learning English as a foreign language in the context of Iran. Post-graduate English language students need to possess excellent communication skills and high level of confidence in giving lectures and presentations which are attended as the fundamental activities in MA level. Oral communication apprehension is an influential factor which hinders students' achievements in this regard. Post-graduate MA students majoring in English face up with variety of difficulties concerning class presentations, group discussions, meeting and conversation with lecturers and peers. This failure in communication skills prevents them from interaction and negotiation of ideas (Alidost, et al. 2013, Izadi and Atasheneh, 2012). As Alidoost, et al. (2013) claimed communication apprehension is known to be one vital hurdle regarding university students' lack of tendency to participate in classroom activities. As the authors discussed in the light of this problem students even hesitate to come up with an answer and complain about the frustration that they encountered in taking part in class activities. In the same line, Izadi and Atasheneh (2012) believed that in academic environment in Iran the process of face-to-face communication in university classes is a complex challenge due to oral communication apprehension.

Most of the researches dealt with the issue in terms of willingness to communication and considered oral communication apprehension as a factor affecting the students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English. However, the effect of situation in creating fear of communication, communication anxiety or oral communication apprehension is mostly ignored and the studies in this field have focused on the internal aspects or personal traits. Thereupon, the present study concerned with the situational aspect of oral communication apprehension (context-based) as an alternative approach to tackle the problem of Iranian English students of higher education. The purpose of conducting the present research is to examine the relationship between the students' level of Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) using Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-2) developed by McCroskey (1984) and participants four social communication situations including group discussion, meeting, conversation, and class presentation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of communication apprehension (CA) was first introduced in 1970 by McCroskey and since then, some modifications have been made and communication apprehension has come to be regarded as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey 1977, p.78). Communication Apprehension is defined as avoidance or nonparticipation and subsequent withdrawal from communication (Phillip, 1968) and attributed to reticence with generalized neurotic and phobia behavior (Phillips & Metzger, 1973) and modified to "people who perceive that they can gain more by remaining silent than they can by participation" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78) and results in communication avoidance and anxiety (McCroskey, 1984; Horwitz et.al 1986)). Later McCroskey and Richmond (1995) classified communication apprehension under two titles of trait-like and context-based CA. It was discussed that trait is synonymous with personality (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1992) that distinguishes between actual traits and consistently appearing aspects of personality (McCroskey & Richmond, 1995). The Personal Reports of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA) by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) was applied and specified individual's apprehension when interaction with native speakers or individuals from foreign culture. Now that communication apprehension was perceived as hindering anxiety for communication with foreign individuals, the issue of context-based apprehension is concerned.

Context-based CA defined by McCroskey and Richmond (1995) as "a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward communication in a given type of context" (p. 45). It means that students in certain environments may experience low CA, while they face high CA in other situations such as job interviews, talking to the teacher or to a group consisting of his peers, meeting new acquaintances that are called audience-based CA. The later study showed significance of trait-like view (McCroskey & Beatty, 1998) while it can be manifested in different communication contexts (e.g. the four categories of the PRCA-24).

McCroskey's (1982) model which was called the PRCA-24 was applied to the current study. The scale measures four different contexts that CA can exist in: interpersonal, meeting, group, and public. Interpersonal CA is the level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another individual in a one-on-one interaction. In essence, if someone experiences anxiety while thinking about interacting with another person or during an actual interaction with another person, he or she is said to have interpersonal CA. The second and third types of CA, meeting and Group CA, examine the level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons during a meeting/classroom environment or in a small group. Each of these types of CA is contextually based to either a meeting or a small group situation. Lastly, Public CA is the level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons during a formal speaking situation. The last type of CA is probably the form of CA that is closest aligned with the research conducted in Social Phobia discussed earlier.

Aly and Sterling Gowing (2001) in an intercultural survey of an ethnically diverse group of students in a Canadian university commerce program used 24-item Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-2). Frantz, Marlow, and Wathen (2005) examined the differences in communication apprehension (CA), across gender and found that females had a

statistically significant higher level of CA. in a study by Korpela (2011) the causes of CA in the EFL classroom setting as well as internal and external causes were specified. Internal causes of CA were low self-assessed English proficiency, unrealistic demands, concern over errors, evaluation and the impression made on others, while external causes were lack of authentic practice, discouraging teachers and past experiences, high demands, conversation partner's English proficiency and the large size and unfamiliarity of the audience.

In recent studies Illias and Yunus (2013) studied the level of communication apprehension in accounting students in four different communicative contexts of discussions, meetings, interpersonal and public speaking and emphasized on several teaching strategies in reducing fear and anxiety among students. Hashemi et al., (2015), reported the causes of reticence or keeping silent among EFL students at Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences in Iran. They concluded that the participants were aware of the value of oral communication in the classrooms. Participants of the study were very reluctant and apprehensive about speaking English in front of other students or teachers. Khaki (2013) investigated whether there is any significant relationship between learner autonomy and willingness to communicate in Iranian EFL learners and found that there is a significant relationship between learner autonomy and willingness to communicate could be seen in Iranian EFL learners. Fariadian et al., (2014) investigated the relationship between apprehension and English speaking skill among Iranian EFL learners and concluded that reducing the level of anxiety of learners could improve the English speaking ability of the learners.

REASERCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

In this study the following questions are answered relying on result of experimental study and interviewing participants.

Main Hypotheses

H1: Higher Education students differ in the level of oral communication apprehension.

H2: There is a significant relationship between students' level of oral communication apprehension and the context in which they communicate.

H01: Higher Education students do not differ in the level of oral communication apprehension.

H02: There is no relationship between students' level of oral communication apprehension and

Secondary Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference in the level of OCA between group discussion and other contexts.

H02: There is no significant difference in the level of OCA between meeting and other contexts.

H03: There is no significant difference in the level of OCA between conversation and other contexts.

H04: There is no significant difference in the level of OCA between class participation and other contexts.

QUALITATIVE QUESTION

What are the students' perceptions of the sources of their OCA?

METHODOLOGY

This research article is a quantitative and qualitative approach to examine the relationship between students' level of oral communication apprehension and the context in which they communicate. The independent variable of the study consisted of four independent situations namely conversations, meeting, class presentation and group discussion. The level of oral communication apprehension as a dependent variable was examined in relation with these situations.

Participants

Fifty postgraduate students majoring in English language teaching aged 24-30 from Islamic Azad University of Karaj participated in the experimental study. To collect data for the qualitative phase the researcher employed convenience sampling method including 10 subjects for the analysis using individual interview. For examining students' level of oral communication apprehension standard questionnaire developed by McCroskey (1982) titled as PRCA-24 was performed.

Instruments

McCroskey's PRCA-24

The PRCA-24 is the reliable instrument widely used to measure communication apprehension. It is preferable than earlier versions of the instrument (PRCA, PRCA10, PRCA-24B). It is highly reliable (alpha regularly is more than %90) and has very high predictive validity. It permits one to obtain sub-scores on the contexts of public speaking, dyadic interaction, small groups, and large groups. However, these scores are substantially less reliable than the total PRCA-24 scores-because of the reduced number of items. For public speaking the questionnaire of sub-score drawn from the PRCA-24 is used. It is much more reliable for this purpose. This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with others. This instrument examines whether students are strongly disagree = 1; disagree = 2; are neutral = 3; agree = 4; or strongly Agree = 5 with statements. As this questionnaire is a widely used questionnaire with high reliability there is no need to prove reliability and validity of this questionnaire. To approve the results of quantitative questions a qualitative individual interview was performed. To this end, from among 50 individuals who answered the quantitative questionnaire 10 individuals were selected. Each interview lasted about ten minutes. Each participant was interviewed regarding his or her oral communication apprehension in general and four predicted contexts based on the theoretical framework of the study.

Interview

To approve the results of quantitative questions a qualitative individual interview was performed in which from 50 individuals who answered the quantitative questionnaire 10 individuals were selected randomly. Each interview lasted about ten minutes. Each participant was interviewed regarding his or her oral communication apprehension in general and four predicted contexts based on the theoretical framework of the study. Some of the questions of interview were as follow: (see appendix A)

Procedure of Data Analysis

The data was collected by the researcher during the summer of winter 2018 by implementing the study in the two stages. In the quantitative stage, the obtained data

from questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS software (Statistical Packages for the social sciences) to carry out an in-depth analysis of the accumulated data. The raw data was collected and submitted to SPSS 21.0 to perform statistical analysis. First, descriptive statistics (such as mean, standard deviation and item facility) was performed and then descriptive statistics was performed. Then data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using correlation test the level of OCA in four situations was examined. In the qualitative stage, the interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed qualitatively through content analysis. Since the process of content analysis is very lengthy due to complexity of proper categorizing, the researcher went over and over the data to ensure he has done a thorough analysis. It should be mentioned that the categorization process was conducted during a joint session by the supervisor and the researcher. To do so, the researcher copied and read through the transcripts, made brief notes in the margin when interesting or relevant information was found. In the next step, the notes in the margins were reviewed and the different types of information found were listed as well. Then, the researcher read through the list and categorized each item in a way that offers a description of what it was about. In another important step, there was an attempt to identify whether or not the categories can be linked any way and list them as major categories or themes and / or minor categories. Finally, after categorizing all the transcript data into minor themes, they were all reviewed to ensure that the information was categorized as it should be. At the end, the themes were represented in tables and figures.

RESULT aAND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Analysis

Result of data analysis was summarized in the table 1 and figure 1. In the descriptive analysis according to the McCroskey's (1982) PRCA-24 questionnaire, two groups of students are recognizable: a group with OCA and a group without OCA. Out of the entire samples (50 individuals) 9 students were reported with OCA and 41 students were below the standard score of rating them as students with OCA in group discussion situation. Regarding meeting situation, 14 students were reported with OCA and 36 of them were without OCA according to the results. In the case of conversation 13 individuals were reported to have OCA and the rest including 37 students had no OCA and finally with respect to class presentation 18 students showed some level of OCA and 32 other students were rated as individuals without OCA.

Table 1: the level of OCA of students in four contexts

Situation	Group discussion	Meeting	Conversation	Class presentation
OCA				
With OCA	9	14	13	18
Without OCA	41	36	37	32

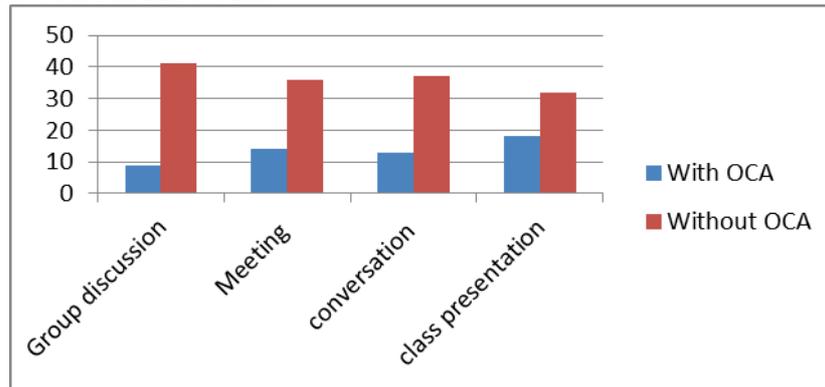


Figure 1: Result of descriptive analysis for the level of OCA in four contexts

According to the standard PRCA-24 questionnaire of McCroskey's (1982), three levels of OCA can be distinguished. Result showed that 12% of students have high level of OCA, 34% of them are reported with average level and finally 54% of them have no OCA or they have a low level of OCA. The result is represented in the table 2, and figure 2.

Table 2: General level and percentage of OCA among students

	Frequency	Percentage
High OCA (83-120)	6	12%
Average OCA (55-83)	17	34%
Low (24-55)	27	54%

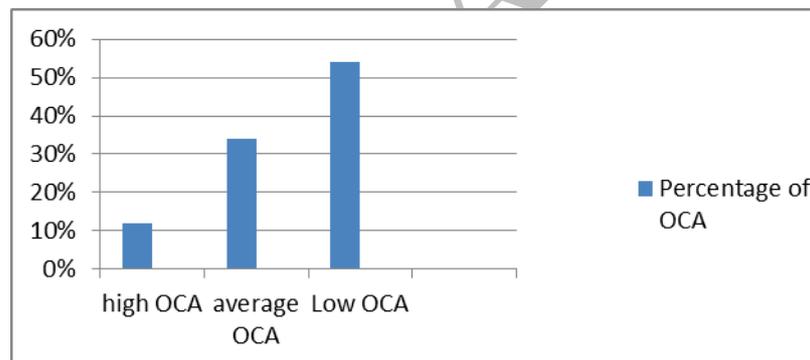


Figure 2: Percentage of OCA among students

To answer the hypothesis one-way ANOVA test was performed to analyze the first hypothesis of the research:

Table 3: Result of One-way ANOVA test

VAR	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
group discussion	50	12.4800	4.83288	.68347	11.1065	13.8535	6.00	22.00
Meeting	50	14.8800	5.80513	.82097	13.2302	16.5298	6.00	27.00
Conversation	50	14.1600	5.48973	.77637	12.5998	15.7202	6.00	24.00
Class presentation	50	15.8400	4.96255	.70181	14.4297	17.2503	8.00	24.00
Total	50	14.3400	5.38977	.38111	13.5885	15.0915	6.00	27.00

The result of descriptive ANOVA test respecting the mean of OCA for four situations showed that generally the level of OCA is lower than the standard level (18) for specification of having OCA. In general, OCA for entire situations is 14.34, that is lower than the specified level by McCroskey's (1982) for leveling students with OCA.

Table 4: Result of inferential ANOVA test

Var	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	301.680	3	100.560	3.597	.015
Within Groups	5479.200	196	27.955		
Total	5780.880	199			

Testing the first hypothesis

H1: Higher Education students differ in the level of oral communication apprehension.

H01: Higher Education students do not differ in the level of oral communication apprehension.

Result of descriptive statistics and ANOVA test showed that respecting the number of students generally 12% had high level of OCA, 34% had average level and 54% had low level of OCA. Therefore, students were different in the level of oral communication apprehension. Also, when paying attention to 'between groups' analysis and the sig level (.015<0.05) the H0 indicating "no different between level of oral communication apprehension in Higher Education students" was rejected.

As much as having distinction between groups with the level of OCA now in different situations students were examined to see in which situations the level of OCA was significant. For this reason Multiple analysis and comparison of situation two-by-two represented situations in which students felt significant level of OCA.

Table 5: Result of multiple comparison of OCA level in four contexts

	(I) Gro	(J) Gro	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey HSD	group discussion	meeting	-2.40000	1.05745	.109	-5.1401	.3401
		Conversation	-1.68000	1.05745	.387	-4.4201	1.0601
		Class presentation	-3.36000*	1.05745	.009	-6.1001	-.6199
	meeting	group discussion	2.40000	1.05745	.109	-.3401	5.1401
		Conversation	.72000	1.05745	.904	-2.0201	3.4601
		Class presentation	-.96000	1.05745	.801	-3.7001	1.7801
	Conversation	group discussion	1.68000	1.05745	.387	-1.0601	4.4201
		meeting	-.72000	1.05745	.904	-3.4601	2.0201
		Class presentation	-1.68000	1.05745	.387	-4.4201	1.0601
	Class presentation	group discussion	3.36000*	1.05745	.009	.6199	6.1001
		meeting	.96000	1.05745	.801	-1.7801	3.7001
		Class conversation	1.68000	1.05745	.387	-1.0601	4.4201

Testing the second hypothesis

H2: there is a significant relationship between students' level of oral communication apprehension and the context in which they communicate.

H02: There is no relationship between students' level of oral communication apprehension and the context in which they communicate.

Result of this hypothesis showed that the sig level in one situation (class participation) was lower than 0.05%, and in other contexts it was higher than the standard level. Therefore, the sig level (.009) indicated that the level of OCA was different in some contexts. In other words, students had different levels of OCA in different contexts. To specify the different contexts precisely, four secondary H0s can be imagined that were provided below:

Secondary hypotheses

H01: there is no significant difference in the level of OCA between group discussion and other contexts.

Result of this hypothesis showed that the sig level in the case of class participation was (0.009) that was lower than 0,05%; therefore, there was a significant difference between the level of OCA in the group discussion and class participation. Also, there was no significance difference between group discussion level of OCA and meeting (0.109>0.05) and conversation (0.387>0.05).

H02: there is no significant difference in the level of OCA between meeting and other contexts.

Result of this hypothesis shows that the sig level in all cases was above 0.05. In the group discussion (0.109>0.05), conversation situation (0.904>0.05), and in the class presentation situation (0.801>0.05); therefore, "there is no significant difference between meeting situation level of OCA and other situations level of OCA" and the H0 was approved.

H03: there is no significant difference in the level of OCA between conversation and other contexts.

Result of this hypothesis showed that the sig level in all cases was above 0.05. In the group discussion (0.387>0.05), meeting situation (0.904>0.05), and in the class participation situation (0.387>0.05); therefore, "there is no significant difference between conversation level of OCA and other situations level of OCA" and the H0 was approved.

H04: there is no significant difference in the level of OCA between class participation and other contexts.

Result of this hypothesis showed that the sig level in the case of group discussion was (0.009) that was lower than 0.05%; therefore, there is a significant difference between the level of OCA in the class participation situation's level of OCA and group discussion situation's level of OCA. Also, there is no significance difference between class presentation level of OCA and meeting situation level of OCA (0.801>0.05) and conversation situation's level of OCA (0.387>0.05). As in one situation a level of difference in OCA was observed (group discussion situation); therefore, H0 indicating that "there is no significant difference between class presentation situation's level of OCA and other situations' level of OCA" was rejected.

Qualitative Analysis

In this qualitative analysis 10 participants were selected through convenience sampling procedure for interview to find out the source of their oral communication apprehension. Students answered questions related to four contexts namely class presentation, meeting, group discussion and conversation. The summary and gist of OCA in each situation was categorized in table 6.

Table 6: Context-based categorization of the sources of OCA

Class presentation	Meeting	Group discussion	Conversation
Lack of logical relationship between sentences	-lack of rehearse	-confronted with opposite gender classmates	-concerning about observing teacher's higher status
-lack of unity in terms of content	-Project voice clearly	-lack of making eye-contact	-lack of friendly relationship with professor
-lack of knowledge on format and pronunciation	-unsuccessful to hit the point	-lack of knowledge to use scientific lexical items	-supervisor's reaction to mistakes
-new audience	-giving repetitive answers	-large number of audience	-teacher's authority
-lack of enough self-esteem	-pronouncing clearly and correctly	-lack of knowledge to answer group members' questions	-lack of positive self- talk
-being compared with previous presenter	-doubtful about answer	-concerning about previous presenter's operation	-lack of self-encouraging
-teachers' expectations		-new and unknown topic	-poor choices of communication
-ambiguous topic		-be criticized by group members	
-argumentative nature of topic		-lack of self-confidence	
-lack of encouraging feedback			
-feeling inferior being exposed with teachers' higher status			

Testing the third question

The third question of the current study intended at investigating the participants' perception of the sources of their OCA. Result of interviewing 10 participants to get an in-depth understanding of their reasons for being apprehended in their studies particularly in four communication contexts including class presentation or lecture, group discussion, meeting and conversation. The third question was: what are the students' perceptions of the sources of their OCA? The findings from interview data which were analyzed through content analysis revealed that the sources of the participants' OCA resulted from four major elements namely formality, novelty, unfamiliarity and subordinate.

Formality: As the students reported, one of the major reasons for their communication apprehension was when they were encountered a formal situation or a formal person, as in the case of one professor other than students' regular lecturer.

Novelty: Novelty was another remarkable element which emerged as one source of apprehension. As McCroskey (1982) discusses foreign language learners feel apprehension in their communication when they face up with a totally new person or new situation.

Unfamiliarity: The third element interrupting the students' communication was unfamiliarity. As McCroskey(1982) postulates, It's one outstanding barrier for the students in different contexts. For instance, in the case of group discussion the students felt apprehension if the topic of discussion is not a new issue but it is unfamiliar for them.

Subordinate: Unlike all the previously mentioned elements which were out of all students' beliefs, subordinate proved to have very fundamental role in preventing students from making dual conversations. There were variety of reports focusing on feeling inferior by being exposed to more fluent and able partner..

The general theme of OCA in postgraduate students derived from four contexts was depicted in a form of logical figure covering the main overall items that each of which is concluded from many observations in different situations (figure 3).

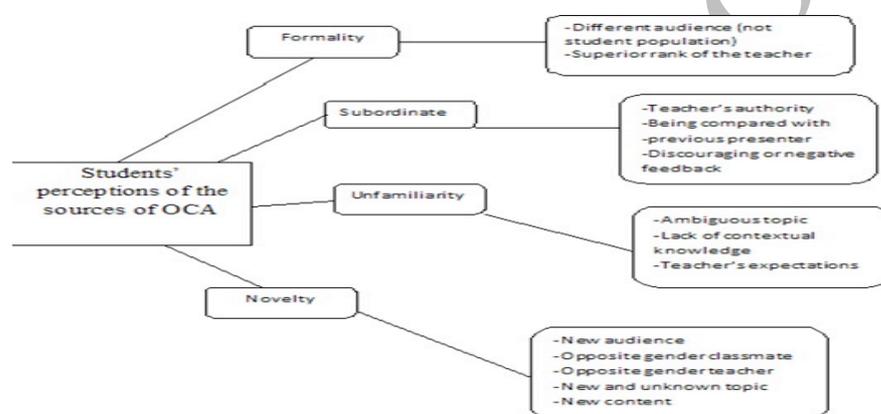


Figure 3: content analysis of the sources of students' OCA

Discussion

Quantitative study led us to study results of OCA in postgraduate students using an interview. The interview was a qualitative means. Result of quantitative analysis was discussed in the form of two research questions that represented a low OCA among participants of the study and only in the case of conversation context was significant. And in other contexts though OCA existed but it was not significant. In the case of qualitative analysis, also, result of interview was deeply discussed in the form of answering to the third question of the research. Below a general discussion covering the cross point of the two method of the study with supports from previous studies is provided. Regarding the quantitative and qualitative analysis several studies supported our study with respect to the source of OCA.

McCrosky's study for testing reliability and validity of PRCA-24 scores and partial scores of PRCA-24 ranged between 97 to 98. However, each partial score predicts 94 to 96 percent of variance in the total scores. Therefore result of McCrosky's study represents similar and approximately high level of OCA for students that are to some extent not in line with the result of our study, but this may not undermine the appropriateness of the research instrument. Our study revealed that only 12% of students have high level of OCA and 34% have average level of OCA. Students that were involved in this study are postgraduate students having passed 6 years of university classes. Therefore, they were expected to have lower OCA, as

most of them are working in some social positions and language institutes; therefore, the result of our study seems reasonable to the level of students.

Result of this study showed that students who participated in study generally have higher OCA in class presentation (sig=009), such lack of similarity with other situations might be because of the fact that conversation is a real situation that individuals are expected to do their best, and really students more than other situations feel that they should have no mistake and consequently it has results in significant relationship between OCA and conversation context. The source of OCA in conversation context is approved by result of qualitative interview. In other context, also, the sources of OCA were improved. However, result of qualitative study was in line with a part of our study and it can be generalized to the whole students in quantitative analysis, although slight differences in the researcher's idea might be for mismatch between participants in the two studies both qualitative and quantitative section.

After interviewing students about four situations and analyzing the gist of interviewees' ideas five themes or elements were concluded that each theme was based on some observations. These elements are formality, subordinate, unfamiliarity, and novelty. In the case of formality as the cause of OCA students said the sources laid in different audience and superior rank of the teacher. Regarding subordinate theme, teacher's authority, comparisons with previous presenters' presentation, discouraging or negative feedback were reported as the sources of OCA. Respecting unfamiliarity theme, the source of OCA was reported as ambiguous topic, lack of contextual knowledge, and teacher's expectations. In the case of conspicuousness theme, the sources of OCA were reported as presenting in classroom, discussion between supervisor and supervisee, and answering teacher's questions. The final general theme of OCA was novelty that was concluded on the basis of issues such as new audiences in the classroom, in front of opposite gender classmate, opposite gender teacher, new and unknown topics, and new content.

In addition, result of this study approves previous studies that measured the level of OCA and their sources. Studies by Hashemi et al (2015), Korpela (2011), Afghari and Sadeghi (2012), Paakkanen and Pirinen (1990), Frantz et al (2005), Aly et al (2001) are in line with result of our study. These scholars, also, specified the sources of OCA in similar themes. It worth mentioning that that the general result of our study approves the theory of McCrosky (1982) in the way in which the sources of OCA was categorized by him as in novel situations, formal contexts, unfamiliarity with content and materials, learned helplessness and learned responsiveness, development of negative expectations.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to exam Iranian higher education students' level of oral communication apprehension in different social communicative contexts using McCroskey's PRCA-24 questionnaire. Then 10 students were selected from among the entire 50 students. These students were interviewed about their source of OCA in the four contexts. Result of both studies was achieved and compared with previous studies.

Regarding experimental study it was specified that there is a significant difference between postgraduate students with respect to the level of OCA, but there was significant difference between students' OCA in the four contexts. In the case of group discussion context and class

presentation context as sig is 0.009 and less than 0.05; therefore there was a significant difference between the level of OCA in the group discussion situation and class presentation situation. Two by two comparison in the case of other situations showed that there is no significance difference between them as in group discussion the sig level was (0.904) for meeting (0.109>0.05) and for conversation situation it was (0.387>0.05).

Respecting qualitative analysis in 'formality' theme causes laid in different audience and superior rank of the teacher. In 'subordinate' theme, teacher's authority, comparisons with previous presenters' presentation, discouraging or negative feedback. In 'unfamiliarity' theme, the source of OCA was reported as ambiguous topic, lack of contextual knowledge, and teacher's expectations. In 'novelty' theme issues such as new audiences in the classroom, in front of opposite gender classmate, opposite gender teacher, new and unknown topics, and new content were the main reasons of OCA.

Generally the result of quantitative analysis showed that students have a significant level of OCA just in the case of conversation context, but result of qualitative analysis showed OCA in all four contexts, however, the qualitative interview showed existence of OCA and its sources not the degrees of OCA. Therefore, result of qualitative analysis supports the result of quantitative analysis regarding sources of oral communication apprehension.

While performing the study two limitations encountered the researcher: one was obsession with reliability and stability of the instruments due to application of the questionnaire in different socio-cultural context, and the other was confining participants to endure the study, since those who are familiar with their weaknesses and OCA, their cognitive awareness are targeted to resolve their problems for better achievement in the society. This study and similar studies aim at providing some cues for behavioral therapist and educators to deal treat students' level CA especially in oral presentations.

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APPENDIX A

Qualitative Questionnaire of Oral communication apprehension

Main questions:

1. Have you faced any kind of anxiety or apprehension in your communication if yes to what extent?
2. Do you feel any apprehension in conversation with your classmates, professors, or your supervisor?
3. How about any perceived apprehension in a meeting such as question and answer meeting in your department?
4. Have you experienced any apprehension in your classroom presentation or lecture?
5. Do you feel any apprehension in your group discussion?
6. What do you think of the prominent reasons of your apprehension?

Process of interview (as a sample)

Researcher: good morning.

Elnaz: good morning.

Researcher: first of all I'd like to introduce the work I'm doing, it's a kind of research about sources and reasons of oral communication apprehension of Iranian MA English students. Please introduce yourself and tell me about the semester you are studying.

Elnaz: I'm ELNAZ in second semester.

Researcher: ok nice to meet you. My first question is to know whether you have ever faced apprehension in your communications? I mean communication apprehension during your MA studies?

Elnaz: yes, sure in my classes of course.

Researcher: ok Elnaz, how about any perceived apprehension in a meeting such as question-answer meeting in the department?

Elnaz: honestly speaking I prefer not to take part in such meetings because I am a stressful person and want to be best. In such a situation I am not able to estimate what will be the question, maybe I didn't have enough knowledge about the topic or it will be brand new topic for me so I prefer to have a plan before question-answer meeting, I mean...

Researcher: if the topic of meeting has been posed in advance and you have enough time to study?

Elnaz: Ok. This one is much better and I feel low apprehension when I know the topic and I have enough time to study, but anyway question is a stressful thing. I feel a little embarrassed when I have to answer a question, to use grammatically correct sentences and choose formal words.

Researcher: have you experienced any apprehension in classroom presentation or lecture?

Elnaz: yes of course, my basic problem in presentation is that I forgot what I want to say. After I start, I challenge with some stress to continue and forget the statements I prepared. In some cases I can't make a logical relationship between my sentences.

Researcher: do you feel any apprehension in your group discussions?

Elnaz: group discussion is an informal community and I feel more relaxed and low apprehension in such a situation. I know the members and usually topic is familiar too. When other members speak I know all of us have some problems in speaking and it seems as usual, but anyway I experienced low apprehension in terms of knowledge and speaking fluently.

Researcher: if your professor entered the group?

Elnaz: oh, I face higher apprehension in such situation because I have to be more careful to use grammatically correct sentences and suitable vocabularies and be fluent enough.

Researcher: does the personal character of the professor make any difference?

Elnaz: definitely yes. more friendly and lovely professor decrease my apprehension level so I feel he is one of my friends and classmates, but more serious professor increase my apprehension and create an stressful atmosphere. I feel, with any mistake it seems I am a weak student.

Researcher: I'm sure you have different conversations with your friends and professors particularly with your supervisor. Do you experience any apprehension in these conversations?

Researcher: What about the gender of your partner? Does it affect your apprehension level?

Elnaz: sure, I feel higher level of apprehension while speaking with my male partners specially it's more apprehensive when I have to start the conversation. After starting I feel a little relaxed and free from anxiety gradually.

Researcher: my last question is, what do you think about the prominent reasons of your apprehension?

Elnaz: for example, with my friends when I talk about course and classes I have low apprehension, I feel comfort but with new students I can't be so relaxed and try to choose suitable words to communicate and this situation is a little more stressful. Sometimes maybe lack of required knowledge about the topic is one of the reasons. The atmosphere of the communication is another reason, I mean more friendly group makes me relaxed and more formal and also new environment and members make me more apprehensive.