

A Study of Speaking Anxiety in the English Presentations of Chinese Non-English Major Postgraduates With a Special Focus on the Case of Stutterers

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Abstract—As knowledge of speaking anxiety associated with English presentation, an activity common to Chinese postgraduate students, and how it is perceived by stuttering students, remains inadequate, this study aims to explore the causes, effects and solutions of speaking anxiety in presentations of Chinese postgraduate students and the different perspectives of stutterers on speaking anxiety. Using a qualitative approach, this study interviewed twelve Chinese postgraduate students, two of whom suffer from stuttering. The findings are that the causes of speaking anxiety in non-stuttering participants are mainly features of learners, interpersonal connections, language challenges, background of learners and character of the presentation, and the impact is primarily on presentation performance. Coping strategies are student preparation, positive thinking and seeking the support of peers. Participants who stutter differ from those who do not stutter in that the main causes of anxiety are pronunciation disorders and fear of negative evaluation, and the effect of anxiety is exacerbation of stuttering. Their coping strategies are preparation of practice in order not to stutter and positive thoughts of pretending that they do not stutter. Future research could delve into the difficulties encountered by non-stuttering and stuttering learners in foreign language learning from cognitive and neurological perspectives.

Index Terms—foreign language speaking anxiety, Chinese postgraduate, presentation, stutter

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

General foreign language anxiety is common for students (Marwan, 2016; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). Among foreign language anxiety in general, speaking in particular is one of the most anxiety-provoking skills in foreign language learning (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Luo, 2014) as students need to process language input and generate their ideas at the same time and oral practice activities might be challenging and frustrating to the process of learning (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020). Little research has focused on Chinese postgraduate students' speaking anxiety during presentations. Although communicative language teaching (CLT) has been introduced to China since early 1990s (Liao, 2000), there have been challenges in its application, such as students being more comfortable attending lectures on reading and grammar and taking regular exams, and CLT not being able to adapt to textbooks that focus more on grammar, reading and writing (Rao, 2013). As a result, most of the postgraduate students' previous English classes have focused less on speaking skills, which resulted in their insufficient speaking skills and experience in presentation. Presentations are commonly used in English classes at the postgraduate level, therefore speaking anxiety in presentations needs to be investigated.

The foreign language learning anxiety of learners with stuttering, a disorder that accounts for 0.72 percent (Craig et al., 2002) of the population, has rarely been studied. Much research has been conducted on the anxiety of people who stutter in their L1, revealing the negative effects of anxiety associated with stuttering in terms of schooling, sociability and psychology (Klompas & Ross, 2004; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999; Blumgart et al., 2014). García-Pastor and Miller's (2019) study which was inclusive of foreign language learning anxiety in stuttering learners found that stutterers had higher anxiety than non-stutterers on the skill of speaking. However, few studies have investigated foreign language speaking anxiety in stuttering learners during presentations.

B. Aim of the Research

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the speaking anxiety of Chinese postgraduate students in their presentations by examining the causes, effects and coping strategies in order to better understand the constraints on postgraduate students' speaking learning. In addition, the research also focuses on foreign language learning anxiety among stuttering

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learners, with the intention of helping them to learn better, and enhancing people's awareness and understanding of stuttering learners. Therefore, the research questions are:

- (1) What are the effects, causes and coping methods for speaking anxieties in giving presentations for non-English major postgraduate students in China?
- (2) Do the stutterers in the group experience language anxiety differently?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Foreign Language Anxiety

(a). *The Meaning of Foreign Language Anxiety*

Anxiety is defined by Rachman (2004, p. 3) as 'a tense unsettling anticipation of a threatening but formless event'. Anxiety is a negative emotion that can take the form of a variety of disturbing psychological states such as fear, nervousness, and exhilaration. Among them, foreign language anxiety is situation-specific anxiety, which is specifically related to the context of foreign language learning and occurs during the learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Chen & Chang, 2004).

Different researchers have different opinions on the question of whether foreign language anxiety is a result of language processing or a cause of foreign language learning difficulties. The debate between Sparks and Ganschow and MacIntyre represents mechanism, which supports the primary role of cognitive ability in second language learning, and contextualism, which supports the role of the learning environment and emotion on anxiety respectively (Zheng, 2008). Sparks and Ganschow (1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1995) argued for the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH), which stated that the main cause of foreign language anxiety was the student's linguistic coding deficit, which was reflected in phonology, syntax and semantics. Language coding deficits were at the root of foreign language learning difficulties, while language anxiety was a side effect of language deficits. On the other hand, MacIntyre (1995a, 1995b) argued that anxiety was an important factor affecting foreign language learning and had a non-negligible impact on students' foreign language acquisition, rather than just being the result of deficiencies in language coding. MacIntyre pointed out that although Sparks and Ganschow's study illustrated that poor learners had low proficiency levels, i.e., lower language coding skills, this did not indicate that learning disabilities of poor students all stemmed from language coding deficits, as MacIntyre found that poor students also had higher levels of anxiety and therefore it was likely that anxiety was the main cause of foreign language learning disabilities. Saito et al. (1999) had a similar view to MacIntyre in that their study found that a large number of students had reading anxiety, and they presumed that it was unlikely that all of these students suffered from language coding disorders, so it could be inferred that not all of the anxiety was caused by language processing skills. Sparks et al. (2000), however, pointed out that the results of the reading study were not convincing because one of the main problems with this research was that it did not test and control for students' reading skill abilities, so it could not be inferred that the anxiety was not caused by language impairment. Furthermore, MacIntyre (1995b) argued that Sparks and Ganschow's LCDH perspective ignored the context of foreign language learning. Horwitz (2000) made his own argument for this, acknowledging that some cognitive or linguistic impairments may cause anxiety, but there are also anxiety and language processing deficits which are independent of each other. Such anxiety is not a side effect of language processing and can have a negative impact on foreign language learning.

The findings of previous research could be summarized as follows. Firstly, Coding difficulties are not the principal cause of students' foreign language difficulties and anxiety, as foreign language anxiety is common in foreign language learning classrooms (Von Worde, 2003; Marwan, 2016), but language learning difficulties exist only in a small number of students (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004). Therefore, anxiety is not only a side effect of coding disorders; there are many other factors in learning contexts that contribute to anxiety. Secondly, it is not only coding disorders but also affective factors such as anxiety which can interfere with foreign language learning in a non-negligible way. As Zheng (2008) stated, foreign language anxiety is a significant affective condition that may have an impact on learners' linguistic cognitive functioning.

(b). *Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety*

Young (1991, p. 427) summarized six causes of language anxiety from the previous literature, namely personal and interpersonal anxieties, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures and language testing. More recently, Luo (2012) has systematically identified four main causes of anxiety based on previous research: the classroom environment (which involves the role of the teacher, classroom practices, and relationships among the students in the classroom), learner characteristics (which includes competitiveness, perfectionism, fear of negative evaluation, low self-esteem and self-perceptions and learner beliefs), the target language and the uniqueness of foreign language learning process (which consists of speaking, listening, reading and writing). Specifically, the teachers' role as an authority figure in the classroom can create a tense atmosphere, as they spend most of the time talking and evaluating students' classroom performance rather than facilitating and encouraging learning, which can easily put students in a state of anxiety and tension (Chinpakdee, 2015; Young, 1991). Students also perceive classroom organization as having implications for foreign language anxiety, and they favour a relaxing, open and inclusive classroom environment and have their own

preferences for particular seating arrangements (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). Even the successful foreign language learners feel emotional challenge when confronted with their peers, especially the more talented ones, due to the anxiety generated by competition and comparison (Tóth, 2011). Some learners who have low self-esteem and low self-efficacy do not find themselves valued and are therefore more likely to be frustrated in the process of learning a foreign language (Jin et al., 2015; Cheng, 2001). Having positive beliefs about learning a foreign language is important, and the more positive the learner's attitude, the less negative emotions will be generated (Aslan & Thompson, 2021).

(c). Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety

Based on previous studies, anxiety affects learners in three main ways. First, anxiety negatively affects academic performance. Salehi and Marefat (2014) reported that language anxiety has a debilitating effect on foreign language test results, and Aida (1994) pointed out that anxiety adversely influences students' achievement in Japanese. Second, anxiety can lower students' social skills. Students in anxiety are reluctant to communicate in English and participate in classroom activities (Atef-Vahid & Kashani, 2011; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Rastegar & Karami, 2015). Third, anxiety can make learners psychologically unable to concentrate (Andrade & Williams, 2009) and emotionally lose their desire and motivation to learn (Liu & Huang, 2011). However, anxiety does not only contribute negatively to the learning of a foreign language. Marcos-Llinás and Garau's (2009) study suggested that anxiety does not necessarily lead to students' poor performance, as high-anxiety students also perform well. Also, anxiety can even promote students' progress by allowing them to have a sense of tension, a feeling that keeps them awake and motivated rather than being mentally depleted and bewildered (Brown, 2014). In general, various causes of anxiety may have different effects on students of varying abilities and personalities, which may be positive or negative. However, anxiety should not be promoted for the possible benefits it potentially provides to students. As Horwitz (2017) states, it is unethical to add anxiety to students, and motivation can be boosted by helping them plan learning goals and develop learning strategies, rather than inflicting anxiety.

(d). Students' Coping Strategies for Foreign Language Anxiety

By using an open-ended questionnaire to investigate students' strategies for dealing with language anxiety, Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) summarized five types of strategies, namely, preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking and resignation, with preparation being a behavioral strategy, relaxation being an affective strategy, and positive thinking and peer seeking being cognitive strategies. The first four types of strategies are frequently used by students (Marwan, 2007). Although Kondo and Ying-Ling have concluded how students deal with language anxiety, the effectiveness of these strategies has not been measured to give teachers clues on how to help students more effectively. Yasuda and Nabei (2018) used a 6-point Likert scale questionnaire on 158 Japanese university students to explore the effectiveness of these five types of strategies on foreign language anxiety. They found that relaxation and peer seeking had no role in the alleviation of language anxiety, and that comparison and positive thinking could positively influence it. However, setting only five questions in the questionnaire to explore the effects of the five strategies may result in insufficient data, and the learning habits and background of the research sample, i.e., Japanese university students, may also have influenced the discoveries. Therefore, based on the limitations of the methodology and the sampling, the findings may not be precise or may only be applicable to this learning context.

B. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in Different Classroom Contexts

Among the foreign language anxieties experienced by students, speaking is the most anxiety-provoking (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Luo, 2014). Students experience different levels of speaking anxiety in different activities (Young, 1990). Specifically, research has shown that among the activities performed in foreign language classrooms, students experience higher levels of speaking anxiety during presentations, being named by the teacher to answer questions and speaking tests, and lower levels of speaking anxiety when working in groups, working in pairs, playing games, performing dramas and singing (Liu, 2006; Hamouda, 2013; Adeel, 2011; Horowitz, 2019; Balgos, 2020; Passiatore et al., 2019).

In particular, presentation is the most common activity for postgraduate students, as teachers do not usually use questioning in postgraduate classes, and for non-English majors, speaking tests are relatively uncommon and assessment of speaking ability is usually in the form of presentations. Therefore, speaking anxiety in Chinese non-English postgraduate students' presentations definitely needs to be studied.

C. Anxiety in People Who Stutter

(a). A Definition of Stuttering

Stuttering is a common disorder (Reilly et al., 2013), and it is a developmental language disability that usually develops in children between the ages of 3 and 8 years, and usually resolves before puberty, but some people suffer from stuttering in adulthood as well (Gordon, 2002). According to Craig et al. (2002), the lifetime prevalence of stuttering is 0.72%, and this figure is supported by Yairi and Ambrose (2013) and is considered reasonable. Symptoms of stuttering are unconscious repetition of syllables, lengthening of syllables, and phonological hindrance (Gordon, 2002; Sommer et al., 2021).

(b). *Foreign Language Anxiety Experienced by People Who Stutter*

Stuttering may be related to phonological coding deficits (Pelczarski & Yaruss, 2014; Sasisekaran et al., 2006), which are reflected in both segmental and metrical properties (Coalson & Byrd, 2015). Skills in phonological/orthographic codes, along with syntactic and semantic codes in native language are the basis of foreign language learning in Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis (Ganschow & Sparks, 1996). Since language coding deficit is an important cause of foreign language learning anxiety (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1995) and stutterers have great difficulty with this skill, it could be that stutterers, besides the anxiety and encoding problems experienced by all language learners, have an additional burden in terms of phonological encoding. It is therefore reasonable for stuttering and anxiety to have a strong association. According to García-Pastor and Miller (2019) and Miller (2020), people who stutter experience more anxiety about learning a foreign language compared to people who do not stutter, and this discrepancy is more pronounced in speaking skills. García-Pastor and Miller (2019) noted that students who stutter are very afraid of negative evaluation because they are not only worried about their English proficiency, but also about stuttering. One interviewee in their study stated that she was embarrassed about her stuttering. Miller (2020) pointed out that high levels of anxiety in people who stutter can bring about stronger physical and psychological responses. Physically, interviewees reported that their hearts beat faster, their faces turned red and they sweat; psychologically, they reported that stuttering caused them shame and embarrassment and that they were under greater mental pressure due to their greater risk of negative comments from their peers.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Design

Quantitative analysis is used in this study as it focuses on the depth of the data (Murray & Hughes, 2008). This research is conducted through semi-structured interview, which requires the framework and questions to be designed in advance, but allows the order of questions to be changed or relevant questions to be elicited during the interview (Dörnyei, 2007; McDonough & McDonough, 2014). The interview questions were designed based on the research questions. Two interview question lists were created as the research subjects included non-stuttering and stuttering learners. The list of interview questions for non-stuttering learners had three topics, namely the effects, reasons and solutions of speaking anxiety. Five questions were added to stuttering learners, including two on basic information about the stutterer and three on stuttering-related speaking anxiety, to help uncover different perceptions of stuttering learners in their speaking anxiety in presentations. These questions can be posed out of order and relevant questions can be added during the interview process.

B. Participants

A total of 12 students participated in this study. The 12 students are all postgraduate students, studying at universities in China, aged between 22 and 25. Their Chinese L1 and English L2. They all passed the College English Test Band 4 when they were undergraduates, which means they are at least at CEFR B1 level. All 12 respondents report suffering from speaking anxiety, and two of them also stutter. The respondents are all non-English majors. At the postgraduate level they all have compulsory public English courses, and presentation is an essential activity in English classes.

C. Procedure

All interviewees signed a consent form before the interview began. This semi structured interview was conducted in a one-to-one format and was recorded during the process with the consent of the interviewees. The language of the interviews is Chinese, as Chinese is the mother tongue of all the interviewees, and it allows the interviewees to escape language barriers that prevent them from expressing what they want to say clearly. Respondents 1-10 are people who do not stutter and respondents 11-12 are people who stutter. This semi structured interview was conducted based on the question lists, during which questions could be added or the order of questions could be adjusted as appropriate. The interviews lasted between 20-40 minutes. They ended with the interviewer expressing appreciation to the interviewees.

D. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this research. In this study, the coding scheme was inspired by a review of relevant literature (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018), for example the starting point for coding data on the causes of spoken language anxiety was referenced from studies by Young (1991) and Luo (2012), and for coding data on coping strategies was referenced from the study by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004). As there were new data findings in this study, the coding scheme was modified based on the actual data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The specific implementation of the thematic analysis was based on the phrases stated by Braun and Clarke (2006): firstly, the interview data was transcribed by the researcher; secondly, the data was systematically coded initially according to its characteristics (e.g. in this study the codes were: feelings of the heart, negative words describing one's abilities, interaction with the teacher, etc.); thirdly, the codes were synthesized into themes (e.g. in this study the themes were: main theme 'sources' with its sub-themes 'features of learners', 'interpersonal connections', 'language challenges', etc.).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Sources of Speaking Anxiety in Presentations

The results of the interviews have similarities to those of Luo (2012) and Young (1991), with some additional findings. The organization and classification of the interview data is adapted from Luo's (2012) and Young's (1991) categories of sources of foreign language anxiety, which are broadly grouped into five categories, namely features of learners, interpersonal connections, language challenges, background of learners and character of the presentation.

(a). Features of Learners

1. Lack of Confidence

Self-confidence is an important factor influencing mindset and performance. All respondents mentioned a lack of confidence as a source of speaking anxiety, which could hinder performance at a true level. This is in line with Raja's (2017) statement that lack of confidence is the most prevalent source of public speaking anxiety. Comparisons with peers may contribute to the lack of confidence. Interviewee 2 stated: 'When I saw my classmate who excelled in the presentation before my sequence, I would envy his ability and feel inferior to myself instantly'. When seeing the charismatic performance of peers, learners can easily become attracted to their excellence and lose confidence by comparing what others are good at with what they are not good at.

2. Fear of Negative Comments

The majority of respondents reported that they were under psychological pressure due to the fear of receiving negative comments from teachers and peers. This is consistent with Kitano's (2001) argument that learners who are inclined to fear negative evaluations have a greater likelihood of reporting foreign language anxiety. However, interviewee 6 stated that she did not care about what others say about her because she was convinced that what others saw might only be one-sided, and that only she was the one who really knew herself. Her anxiety mainly came from her own negative perception of herself, i.e., not living up to the standards she had set for herself.

(b). Interpersonal Connections

1. Student-to-Teacher Interaction

Students see their teachers as people with authority, whose personality and attitude partly determine the level of anxiety of learners. Nine respondents supported this view. For example, interviewee 8 said that if he saw his teacher frowning during the speech, he would panic for fear that he had said something wrong. Students will sense the teacher's judgment of their performance based on their expressions and gestures while delivering a speech, and some sensitive students may also over-interpret the teacher's behaviour. This has similarities with Khusnia's (2016) study that the teacher's personality and conduct can have an effect on the students' mindset.

2. Student-to-Student Relationships

Respondents' perceptions of the effect of peer attention on anxiety levels were differed. Six felt that anxiety levels were lower when the audience had their heads down and were not staring at them closely, as this meant that their performance was not being noticed too much and there was less chance of being criticized, while three felt that the audience's disinterest in them increased their anxiety, fearing that the audience would find their presentation meaningless or unattractive. Although these external factors have different effects on learners, what is the same is that most learners place a lot of emphasis on how they are perceived by others and ignore how they feel about themselves.

(c). Language Challenges

Spoken English itself is a challenge for speakers. The differences between Chinese and English are much greater than the similarities (Zheng, 2018). Therefore, learners' challenges in language learning contribute to their anxiety. Vocabulary was a hindrance to presentation performance and could trigger anxiety. Interviewee 8 was afraid that people would not understand him because he could not say in English what he wanted to say in Chinese. Respondents would struggle with the inability to translate accurately between Chinese and English words, attributing this to their lack of English proficiency. In fact, conflicts in translation are inevitable due to cultural differences and semantic ambiguities between Chinese and English (Zhang, 2021).

(d). Learning Background

The majority of respondents reported that they were uncomfortable speaking at a podium in front of a crowd. For example, interviewee 7 stated that 'I'm used to being an audience and when I'm a speaker it's like I'm thrust from a corner of obscurity into the spotlight. It's disturbing'. For Confucian-influenced Chinese students, this public speaking context may seem overwhelming. Chinese students have a 'silent learning' style under Confucianism (Sit, 2013). As Wen and Clément (2003) stated, Chinese students seem to be more responsive to the perceptions of the public about their speech. In this culture of quiet learning, the lack of opportunities for self-presentation in the classroom can make Chinese students resistant and unconfident about speaking, which reinforces speaking anxiety. This is in line with Woodrow's (2006) finding that English learners coming from Confucian cultures experience greater anxiety than learners from other nationalities.

(e). Character of the Presentation

Respondents felt that the difficulty level of the presentation affected their level of anxiety. Most respondents noted that the level of anxiety increased with the complexity of the topic. However, interviewee 10 had a different view: 'I'm more worried about making mistakes on simple topics. It's too humiliating, and I have to be perfect to prove my ability'. The level of difficulty of the presentation task can affect the level of anxiety. Generally speaking, difficult topics are more anxiety-provoking compared to simple ones, as they require a higher standard of English language ability. However, for some people, easier subjects can also induce anxiety as more perfect performance is expected on them, and failures on simple tasks can lead to an underestimation of ability.

Some respondents also indicated that they would be much more concerned about presentation performance if it contributed to their final course grade. The source of this anxiety is then not only the presentation itself, but also the stress caused by the external consequences. Although this grading mechanism may make learners more motivated, they are less likely to enjoy the presentation and learn from it, and instead will be very concerned about whether the marks are up to scratch.

B. Effects of Speaking Anxiety in Presentations

All interviewees felt that speaking anxiety made their spoken English during presentations lower than their true level. For example, interviewee 5 felt that anxiety made her speak faster, forget words, and speak illogically. Anxiety hinders the performance of authentic English ability during presentations through its psychological and physiological effects on the speaker, which is consistent with Woodrow's (2006) findings that anxiety can have a negative impact on foreign language speaking performance.

However, respondents differed in their views on the implications of anxiety for future oral presentations. Two indicated that oral anxiety was a facilitator for future speaking, while six thought the opposite. For example, interviewee 10 noted that 'I am afraid that I am not competent enough, so I keep practising and in the process I feel that I am 'forced' to improve my speaking skills, so I will do better in my future presentations'; while interview 11 expressed that 'I don't like the feeling of anxiety, it makes me escape and give up. I like to study in a relaxed environment'. The different effects of anxiety on academic ability are related to the varying personalities of learners. Some have the ability to transform anxiety into motivation to learn, at which point it contributes to human growth (Brown, 2014); others do not know how to deal with anxiety and can easily get caught up in negative emotions, which in turn can lead to their resistance to oral learning.

C. Students' Coping Strategies for Speaking Anxiety in Presentations

As revealed through the interviews, the main strategies students use to cope with speaking anxiety are preparation, positive thinking and seeking the support of peers, all of which are types of strategies mentioned in Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004), with the former being behavioral strategy and the latter two being cognitive strategy. All three strategies are considered effective by the students in this study, which differs from Yasuda and Nabei's (2018) research where it mentioned the ineffectiveness of peer seeking. The reason for the difference could be the insufficient number of participants in this research or the diverse learning contexts and environments of the participants.

(a). Preparation

The majority of respondents believed that improving the English language skills was the most effective solution, which is in line with Maharani and Roslaini's (2021) findings, as the lack of confidence and fear of negative evaluation stem from low competence.

(b). Positive Thinking

Positive thinking can be beneficial for anxiety relief before and during a presentation. Interviewee 9 mentioned: 'If I tell myself I can do it, it seems like I can actually end up doing it'. Positive self-cueing may make for a better performance, as the speakers are able to identify and use their strengths. Being confident also makes one look attractive. Positive mental thinking during the presentation is also necessary. Interviewee 10's strategy was to ignore the mistakes he had already made in his presentation and encourage himself that he had already done a good job. For learners, slightly lowering the demands on themselves, not imprisoning themselves with the shackles of perfectionism and appreciating their own abilities will lead to a sense of achievement rather than anxiety.

(c). Seeking the Support of Peers

Respondents stated that sharing anxiety by talking to peers could ease the tension. Interviewee 8 mentioned that his anxiety was relieved when he talked to his classmates and realized that some of them were about the same level as him. Students are psychologically comforted as they develop a sense of empathy and understanding in talking to peers who are also experiencing anxiety. When the prevalence of speaking anxiety is discovered, their anxiety is alleviated as they perceive themselves as having similar abilities to their peers rather than inferior to them, which is one of the sources of speaking anxiety (Ansari, 2015). The importance of peer seeking was also mentioned by Siagian and Adam (2017), whose study revealed that the best strategy students found to overcome speaking anxiety was peer seeking.

D. Speaking Anxiety in Presentations from the Perspective of Stuttering Learners

Stuttering learners have some different perceptions compared to non-stuttering learners in terms of the effects, causes and coping strategies of speaking anxiety in presentations. The two interviewees have suffered from stuttering since childhood and stutter in both their mother tongue and English. Interviewee 11 indicated that stuttering was similar in both mother tongue and English, while interviewee 12 stated that stuttering was worse in English.

(a). Sources of Speaking Anxiety in Presentations in the Perspective of Stuttering Learners

Pronunciation difficulties and fear of negative evaluation are major sources of anxiety for stuttering learners. Pronunciation disorder is a feature of stuttering, and both interviewees reported getting stuck on some sounds which were difficult to produce. Interviewee 11 pointed out: 'I know how to pronounce the word 'student' and I can understand the phonetic symbols, but I can't say it as fluently as others, so I feel very impatient'. Phonological encoding disorder is a contributing factor to stuttering (Pelczarski & Yaruss, 2014; Sasisekaran et al., 2006), therefore articulation is a significant challenge for stuttering learners. Although non-stuttering learners also experience pronunciation problems when speaking, such as inability to pronounce appropriately due to dialect, it is not enough of a factor for them to be anxious.

Stuttering learners are afraid of negative comments from others, as the low self-esteem and inferiority associated with stuttering may make them more sensitive to the judgments of others. Interviewee 11 stated: 'I am afraid that my teacher will criticize me for not being serious because of my lack of fluency and this makes me very frustrated'. Learners who stutter have to work much harder to achieve the same level of fluency as learners who do not stutter, due to their phonological coding difficulties. Criticism from an authoritative teacher in the classroom may lead the stuttering learner into self-doubt and the belief of being a failure. Negative feedback from peers also causes concern for stuttering learners. Interviewee 12 mentioned that some of his peers could not help but giggle at his stuttering, which made him lose face. Stuttering learners may fear that their disorder will become a topic of conversation after class, leading to contempt and gossip among classmates, which may affect their social relationships. This is consistent with Miller's (2020) study that stuttering learners are more likely to be evaluated negatively and face greater emotional stress than non-stuttering learners.

Unlike the ten non-stuttering respondents, neither of the two stuttering respondents identified English language ability as a significant source of anxiety. It might be assumed that stuttering learners attribute all their underperformance to their stuttering and ignore their own English proficiency, which can lead them to become overwhelmed with anxiety about how to get rid of their stuttering at the expense of developing other aspects of their language skills.

(b). Effects of Speaking Anxiety in Presentations in the Perspective of Stuttering Learners

Speaking anxiety can exacerbate the degree of stuttering in learners who stutter, which is also mentioned by Naachimuthu and Kalpana (2022). Even non-stuttering learners are at risk of stuttering when stressed and anxious (Woodrow, 2006; Suleimenova, 2013), stuttering learners, who already have deficits in pronunciation and fluency, may stutter more severely during anxiety. Interviewee 11 noted: 'My stuttering is worse when I am anxious because the more I am afraid of stuttering and making a fool of myself during a speech, the worse I will do it'.

(c). Coping Strategies for Speaking Anxiety in Presentations in the Perspective of Stuttering Learners

Coping strategies for stuttering learners are mainly positive thinking and preparation, while seeking the support of peers, which is a strategy for non-stuttering learners, is not employed by them. The content of positive thinking differs for stutterers and non-stutterers. Interviewee 11 stated that he would imply that he was stutter-free. Stuttering learners expect themselves to achieve fluency in pronunciation and speech, the ability that non-stutterers already have, which means that they have to strive to have capacities that others can easily acquire. Preparation is also a strategy for stuttering learners to cope with speaking anxiety. Interviewee 12 mentioned: 'I will practice the parts that I will have difficulty with over and over again before I give a speech, in order not to make the stuttering so obvious'. Different from the non-stuttering learners, their preparation focused on how to alleviate their stuttering. Seeking the support of peers is not considered a strategy for learners who stutter, as it is difficult to gain empathy from non-stuttering peers, and the probability of finding peers in a class who also stutter is low. In addition, they may not be willing to actively share about their stuttering due to inferiority complex.

V. CONCLUSION

A. Summary of the Research

This study examines speaking anxiety of non-English major Chinese postgraduate students in presentations. The study also focuses on the speaking anxiety experienced by the stuttering group during speech, demonstrating the significant impact of stuttering on learners and speculating that learners who stutter may suffer from more anxiety due to phonological encoding disorders.

There are five causes of speaking anxiety in presentations for non-stuttering learners, respectively features of learners, interpersonal connections, language challenges, background of learners and character of the presentation. Stutterers are more worried about pronunciation disorders and negative comments. Pronunciation barriers are not mentioned as a

factor of anxiety by non-stuttering respondents, whereas stuttering learners are much worried about their it in speech, as phonological coding deficit is a factor of stuttering (Pelczarski & Yaruss, 2014; Sasisekaran et al., 2006). English language ability is not mentioned as a major factor in anxiety for stuttering learners, perhaps because they psychologically attribute almost all language learning impediments to stuttering. Speaking anxiety in speech has an impact on speech performance. Stuttering learners perceive that anxiety makes stuttering more severe. Strategies for coping with speaking anxiety include students' preparation, positive thinking and seeking the support of peers. Stuttering learners use preparation and positive thinking strategies. Compared to non-stutterers, stuttering learners perceive stuttering as a major factor affecting speaking learning and triggering anxiety, and suffer from a lack of understanding from their peers.

B. Implications for the Teaching

More attention should be paid by teachers to students' speaking anxiety as it may be manageable for some students, but for others who cannot deal with it well, it has detrimental effects on physical, psychological and academic performance. Teachers need to have the awareness that some students may be stuttering. As pronunciation difficulty is a key factor in presentation anxiety for stuttering students, teachers could get to know in which pronunciations they stutter before the speech and then provide special guidance to them. It is also important for teachers to guide the class to recognize that stuttering is a normal disorder which is not humiliating and instruct stuttering students to accept themselves rather than being self-hating.

C. Suggestions for Future Research

There are two suggestions for future research. Firstly, there could be more participants in order to obtain more generalized findings. More research methods could also be used, such as combining questionnaires, interviews and diaries of students to gain more comprehensive data. Secondly, more scientific knowledge, such as explanation of stuttering in neurogenic, psychogenic and developmental aspects (Ward, 2010; Mendez, 2018), could be applied to help gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between stuttering and foreign language anxiety. More research is also needed on stuttering and phonological coding disorders to explore the possible relationship between stuttering and language coding deficit hypotheses.

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