Oral Presentation Apprehension Factors During ODL

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Abstract
Oral presentations become commonplace in higher education. Apprehension of oral presentation in English is one of the language barriers that university students face at present. Most of the students are experiencing anxieties when it comes to oral presentation. Surprisingly, the apprehension of oral presentation does not only occur in face-to-face class but also in online distance learning (ODL). The objectives of this study are to identify the frequency of the state and trait apprehension factors, discuss the most influential factor of oral presentation apprehension and investigate the preference method of oral presentation during ODL. The methodology used in this study is Purposive Sampling Method. The selected respondents are 92 degree students who are taking Oral Presentation Skills (ELC590) course. Data collected were analysed using SPSS software. The frequency analysis revealed that the students were always worried of the scores and nervousness. Besides that, the marks for the presentation appeared to be the most prominent for state apprehension factors. However, for trait apprehension factors, nervousness showed the highest percentage as compared to the other factors. In addition, the most preference method for oral presentation was recorded.
Keywords: Online Distance Learning, Oral presentations, State Apprehension, Trait Apprehension

Introduction
Universities are places to educate and produce internationally competitive and marketable graduates who can develop the country and survive by getting good jobs after graduation. However, the recent research by Zahiid (2015); Hossain et al (2018) have discovered that fresh graduates are found to be less employable and have poor English and communication skills as factors in the unemployment of fresh graduates. Poor English skills include lack of speaking and oral presentation skills. This is a problem as it can tarnish the image of Malaysia's education system and affect Malaysia's vision of becoming a developed country (Shamsuddin et al., 2013). The need to develop students with good communication skills is strongly

emphasised in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2012-2025 and Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025.

Although English is a second language in Malaysia, it is becoming more and more crucial as society begins to recognise its importance in today's competitive digital age. At the university level, English is offered as a compulsory course for all undergraduates. Of the four language skills, speaking is the greatest fear among English learners (Horwitz et al., 1986) because it requires more vocabularies, challenges the pronunciation, articulation, content as well as confidence level (Rahmat, 2019). Many English language (ESL) learners find oral presentations as frustrating, intimidating, challenging and stressful (King, 2002). Bhati (2012) has found out that oral assessment has a higher level of anxiety than written assessment. Thus, due to this scenario, we would like to look further on the students' apprehension in oral assessment during ODL.

Literature Review
Apprehension in Oral Presentation
Horwitz et al (1996) define communication apprehension as "a type of shyness characterised by fear of or anxiety about communicating with others". They argue learners who have problems in listening or learning a spoken message or has difficulty in speaking in public or in a group is experiencing communication apprehension. However, the most common definition is the one provided by McCroskey (1977, p. 78) who defined communication apprehension as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with one or more other people". Although the definitions may different, it is noticed that they all include ideas like fear, stress, anxiety, shyness, and discomfort in contact with others. Meanwhile Rahmat et al (2018) also shows that anxiety in oral presentation is due to trait and state apprehension of learners. Learners' apprehension in oral presentation can be caused by two major factors. According to Santrock (2009), apprehension can be divided into trait and state apprehension. These two factors are commonly used in researches as factors of apprehension in oral communication.

In the field of public speaking, Michael T.Motley has written a book entitled "Overcoming Your Fear of Public Speaking: A Proven Method" in 1995; a proof that apprehension or fear of giving oral speech is real. He focusses on speech as communication tasks rather than as performance. He also recommends strategies to assist any student who suffers from speech anxiety. He said that public speaking anxiety (PSA) has been described as the most common anxiety among learners (Motley, 1995).

Kirkwood and Melton (2002) claimed that anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental disorders faced by public speakers. People who feel anxiety while speaking in public generally tend to avoid situations where they have to perform, but when they face such situations, they suffer severe distress and anxiety. Shanahan (2013) confirmed that some research studies have identified oral communication as a skill employer want their employees to have. Due to this, accounting and business education programs focus on the development of communication competencies among learners. However, not all leaners seem to benefit as much as they would like from improving their communication skills. Previous research suggests that this may result from communication anxiety, commonly known as oral communication apprehension. It discourages individuals from communicating in a variety of situations including one-to-one, groups, meetings and public speaking. This also may affect their capabilities to enhance effective communication skills.

Some previous studies have measured oral communication apprehension of learners in various fields. There has also been some qualitative exploration of the phenomenon. Shanahan (2013) carried out a study in the School of Accounting and Finance at Dublin Institute of Technology. Levels of apprehension were measured for 291 students. The opinions and anxieties of learners were reported and many suffered when called on to present. Unsurprisingly, public speaking is rated the highest concern in the context of oral communication context, and learners are typically most preferable in the one-to-one context.

Shanahan (2013) shows that in the entire sample of 291 learners, 22% or 63 learners had high levels of oral communication apprehension that is, scored 85 or higher. This is much higher than the 16/17% which would be the norm. He claims that one in four, five or maybe six students in a class can become so anxious that giving a presentation can be very difficult. Additionally, up to 3% of the class may have the highest oral apprehension scores in this context, making these learners unable to complete a presentation, and going through this ordeal very stressful.

It is further suggested that these highly anxious learners can be assisted through individual and group training, counsellor and speech therapist support, and brief presentations in a highly supportive atmosphere that emphasises positive feedback. Other methods available to assist learners is giving the option to present via video. This option is only available for one or at most two groups. This further hypothesises that each class of students contains a number of learners with high levels of oral apprehension who need supportive surroundings to support their learning and communication with others.

Furthermore, Rahmat et al (2018) discuss some trait and state factors that may lead to apprehension in oral presentations. They also applied the same division as Santrock (2009) and earlier research has shown that trait and state apprehension can influence oral presentation among learners. They chose to investigate into the factors that induce apprehension for oral presentation among ESL learners by examining how trait and state apprehension affect oral presentation and discovered that trait and state apprehension have different influence on oral presentation among the learners.

Ireland (2020) study seeks to examine students' descriptions of their anxiety about oral presentation. His research provides supportive evidence for levels of apprehension towards presentation by new first year undergraduate accounting students entering a British university. This is to identify possible causes for the apprehension by considering learners' reflections on the presentation.

Grieve et al (2021) clarified that oral presentations and public speaking are vital aspect of the learner experience in the United Kingdom higher education. Many modules (self-contained units include in a program of study) use presentations as a type of assessment and require learners to verbally participate in small and large groups to reinforce their learning. The results of their survey reveal learner's specific anxiety of public speaking and its overall negative impact on their higher education experience. This survey reveals higher education institutions need to recognise that some learners are afraid of public speaking fear and provide more support in assessing oral presentations. They also made the same hypothesis like other researchers have made. Previous research suggests that many learners experience anxiety when speaking in public.

Conceptual Framework

By adapting the questionnaire from Rahmat et al (2018), figure 1 reveals the conceptual framework of the study. This study explores the trait and state of apprehension factors in oral

presentation during ODL among learners. Trait apprehension is internal factor such as personal characteristics and state apprehension is external factor which is environment.
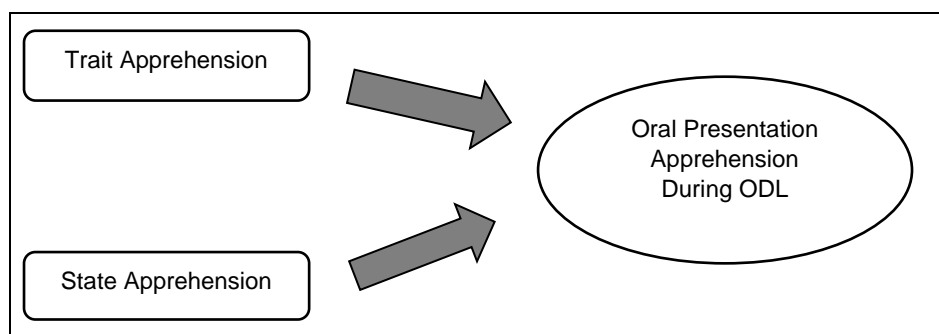

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Study

Methodology

In this section, the research design, population and sampling and instrument, data collection and data analysis procedure are explained.

Research Design, Population and Sampling

The study was conducted at the *Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu Kampus Dungun*. Three different programs had been chosen to take part in this study: Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons.) Finance (BA244), Bachelor of Science (Hons.) Hotel Management (HM240.) and Bachelor of Science (Hons.) Foodservice Management (HM242). This research involved 92 students who enrolled English for Oral Presentation Skills course (ELC 590) and in this course, the students have to complete four assessments such as Informative Speech, Persuasive Speech, Pitch Session and Introduction of Informative Speech. The respondents were selected by using purposive sampling method. This method is used as these are the only respondents possessing the relevant characteristic associated with the research study. The characteristic refers to the respondents who involve in oral presentation activities and may face oral presentation apprehension. Furthermore, these three programs mentioned above were the only programs available enrolling the subject at that time.

Instrument, Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

The instrument utilised was a questionnaire which was adapted from (Rahmat et al., 2018). It had three parts which were part A (demographic profile), part B (oral communication strategies) and part C (causes of fear in oral presentation). The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire at the end of the semester once they have finished their oral presentation assessment. Data were analysed using SPSS software. Frequency mean and descriptive analysis were used for this study.

Results and Discussions

The study was designed to identify the frequency of the state and trait apprehension factors in oral presentation among ESL learners, to discuss the most influential state and trait factors of oral presentation apprehension, and to investigate the preference method of oral presentation during ODL.

Frequency

Table 1 presents demographic profile of the respondents. Based on the result, 40 students (43.5%) were 22 years old. This was followed by students who were 21 years old comprising 37 students (40.2%). Meanwhile, students who were 20, 23, and 24 years old respectively consist of less than 10 students. This table also shows the frequency and percentage of respondents by gender. Apparently, a majority of 76 students (82.6%) participating in this study were females. The male respondents only comprised of 16 students (17.4%). This result indicates that the university was dominated by female students compared to male. In terms of program distribution, the result of frequency analysis indicates that, most of the respondents, which comprised of 34 students (37%) were from Hotel Management program. This was followed by 31 students (33.7%) from Business Administration program and 27 students (29.3%) from Foodservice Management program.

Table 1
Demographic profile

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20 years old	2	2.2
21 years old	37	40.2
22 years old	40	43.5
23 years old	9	9.8
24 years old	4	4.3
Total	**92**	**100.0**
Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Female	76	82.6
Male	16	17.4
Total	**92**	**100.0**
Program	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
BA242	31	33.7
HM240	34	37.0
HM242	27	29.3
Total	**92**	**100.0**

The frequency of state and trait apprehension factors were analysed based on the variables ranging from always, usually, half of the time, seldom and never selected by the respondents for each item that caused the oral presentation apprehension factors (as shown in Table 2 and 3).

Table 2
Frequency Analysis of State Apprehension Factors

State Factors	Always		Usually		About half the time		Seldom		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The marks I will get for the presentation	35	38.0	38	41.3	18	19.6	1	1.1	0	0.0
The size and composition of the audience	34	37.0	39	42.4	18	19.6	1	1.1	0	0.0
The venue of my presentation	25	27.2	49	53.3	17	18.5	1	1.1	0	0.0
The time of day of my presentation	26	28.3	36	39.1	22	23.9	6	6.5	2	2.2
My personal state of emotional well-being	19	20.7	38	41.3	23	25.0	9	9.8	3	3.3
My previous low marks	34	37.0	32	34.8	24	26.1	2	2.2	0	0.0
My previous high marks	24	26.1	30	32.6	33	35.9	3	3.3	2	2.2

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of respondents for state apprehension factors. Based on the scale, 35 students (38.0%) were always worried of the marks that they will get for the presentation, 49 students (53.3%) were usually worried of the venue of the presentation, and 33 students (35.9%) were about half the time concerned of their previous high marks.

Table 3
Frequency Analysis of Trait Apprehension Factors

Trait Factors	Always		Usually		About half the time		Seldom		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
My nervousness	59	64.1	24	26.1	8	8.7	0	0.0	1	1.1
My insufficient preparation	34	37.0	32	34.8	19	20.7	4	4.3	3	3.3
My lack of presentation abilities	31	33.7	41	44.6	16	17.4	3	3.3	1	1.1
My physical appearance	32	34.8	36	39.1	17	18.5	4	4.3	3	3.3
My self confidence	46	50.0	25	27.2	18	19.6	1	1.1	2	2.2
My forgetfulness	37	40.2	29	31.5	19	20.7	5	5.4	2	2.2
My fear for large audience	52	56.5	27	29.3	10	10.9	0	0.0	3	3.3

Table 3 indicates the frequency and percentage of respondents for trait apprehension factors. Based on the scale, 59 students (64.1%) were always worried due to their nervousness, 41 students (44.6%) were usually anxious of their lack of presentation abilities, and 19 students (20.7%) were about half the time concerned on their insufficient preparation and forgetfulness respectively.

Descriptive Analysis of the State and Trait Apprehension Factors in Oral Presentation
The findings of the most influential state and trait apprehension factors of oral presentation during ODL are as shown in Table 4 and 5.

Table 4
Descriptive Analysis of State Apprehension Factors

No.	State Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1.	The marks I will get for the presentation	4.16	0.77	1
2.	The size and composition of the audience	4.15	0.77	2
3.	The venue of my presentation	4.07	0.71	4
4.	The time of day of my presentation	3.85	0.98	5
5.	My personal state of emotional well-being	3.66	1.02	7
6.	My previous low marks	4.07	0.85	3
7.	My previous high marks	3.77	0.95	6
	Overall Mean	**3.96**	**0.62**	

Table 4 presents the mean scores and standard deviation of state apprehension factors in oral presentation. The mean values range from 3.66 (S.D = 1.02) to 4.16 (S.D = 0.77). The highest mean score was towards the marks student will get for the presentation (M = 4.16, S.D = 0.77). It shows the students perceived the highest that the marks they got for the presentation was the most influential state apprehension factor of their fear in oral presentation during ODL. This was followed by their fear of the size and composition of the audience (M = 4.15, S.D = 0.77). A study by Alla et al (2020) also have identified communication apprehension and fear of assessments were found to increase significantly among learners during distance learning. In reference to the size and composition of the audience, as mentioned by Davis et al. (2020), found that virtual learning learners were found to have greater state apprehension than learners participating in face-to-face peer practice sessions. This is due to these virtual learners may have experienced presence, realistic and immersive session like presenting in front of real audience.

Table 5
Descriptive Analysis of Trait Apprehension Factors

No.	Trait Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1.	My nervousness	4.52	0.75	1
2.	My insufficient preparation	3.98	1.03	7
3.	My lack of presentation abilities	4.07	0.86	4
4.	My physical appearance	3.98	1.01	6
5.	My self confidence	4.22	0.95	3
6.	My forgetfulness	4.02	1.02	5
7.	My fear for large audience	4.36	0.92	2
	Overall Mean	**4.16**	**0.75**	

Table 5 presents the mean scores and standard deviation of trait apprehension factors. The mean values range from 3.98 (S.D = 1.03) to 4.52 (S.D = 0.75). The highest mean score was towards the students' nervousness (M = 4.52, S.D = 0.75), followed by their fear for large audience (M = 4.36, S.D = 0.92) and their lack of confidence (M = 4.22, S.D = 0.95). Students perceived the highest that their nervousness was the most influential trait apprehension factor during the online oral presentation.

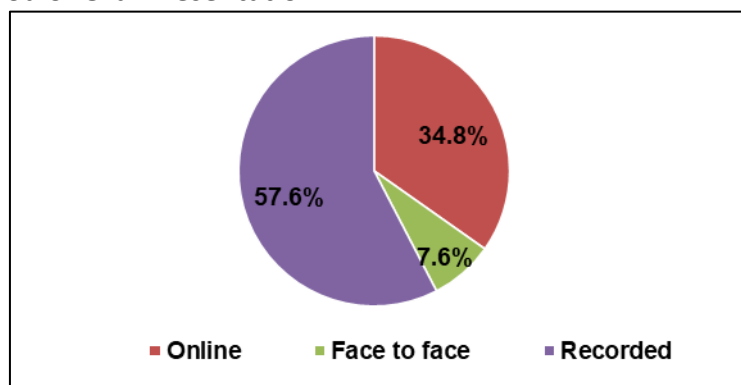**Preference Method of Oral Presentation**

Figure 2: Preference Method of Oral Presentation during ODL

With regard to the apprehension factors that influence the students on their online oral presentation, this study also investigates their preference method of oral presentation during ODL. From figure 2, 57.6% of the students indicated that a recorded oral presentation was their most preferred choice of oral presentation during ODL. This was followed by oral presentation directly online (34.8%). Meanwhile a face-to-face presentation was their least preferred choice (7.6%). Shanahan (2013) reported that presenting via video is an option to provide learners with a supportive atmosphere to perform better in oral presentations.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the students do have some state and trait apprehensions in oral presentation during ODL session. State apprehension such as the marks one will get for the presentation and, the size and composition of the audience are found to be main factors. Most of the students are worried about their marks because all assessments of the course (ELC 590) require the students to do oral presentation. On top of that, the presentation is an individual task which the students have to present in front of the large audience during online session. Hence, these situations contribute to state apprehension and indirectly they affect their performance in oral presentation. On the other hand, trait apprehension such as nervousness and fear of large audience affect the students as presenters. One of the reasons that may lead to this trait apprehension is technical issues. Since this course is offered to first semester degree students during new norm of learning, they may face difficulties in dealing with the technology and computer skills, knowledge of devices and applications. Furthermore, the students have chosen the recorded oral presentation as their most preferred method of presentation during ODL. They prefer to record their presentation as this will ease their level of apprehension and gain self-confidence. By choosing recorded oral presentation, they will be able to get better scores, face large audience and deliver oral presentation comfortably.

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