

# English Oral Communication Apprehension among Myanmar Graduate Students in Thailand

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## Abstract

This study investigates the level of English oral communication apprehension (OCA) among Myanmar graduate students. Oral communication is a crucial skill in language learning, and apprehension in speaking often hinders students' academic success and participation. This research aimed to explore the level of oral communication apprehension among Myanmar graduate students studying in Thailand. To achieve the objectives, the study employed a quantitative methods design. The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) was utilised as the main instrument to collect data from a sample of 100 Myanmar graduate students from two universities in Thailand. The findings revealed that a majority of students experienced moderate levels of oral communication apprehension, particularly in public speaking situations and unfamiliar academic contexts.

**Keywords:** Oral Communication Apprehension, Myanmar Graduate Students, PRCA-24

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of English oral communication apprehension (OCA) among Myanmar graduate students studying in Thailand and to explore the key factors contributing to their anxiety in academic settings. Grounded in McCroskey's (1984) theoretical framework, this study employs four dimensions of communication apprehension: trait-like apprehension, generalised context apprehension, person-group apprehension, and situational apprehension. These dimensions capture both stable and context-dependent aspects of communication anxiety, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how OCA manifests among this student population.

The significance of this research lies in its response to a critical gap in the literature. While previous studies have examined communication apprehension in various international contexts, little attention has been paid to Myanmar graduate students navigating academic life abroad, particularly in Thailand. These students face the dual challenge of meeting global English proficiency expectations while grappling with linguistic insecurity and culturally embedded communication norms that may hinder oral participation. In an era of increasing academic internationalisation and student mobility, educators, institutions, and policymakers need to understand and address the specific communicative barriers faced by this demographic.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address the following research question:

1. What is the level of English oral communication apprehension among Myanmar's graduate students in Thailand?

The findings aim to inform targeted pedagogical strategies and institutional policies.

By identifying contexts where students experience heightened anxiety, such as classroom discussions, presentations, or interactions with professors, educators can design more inclusive, low-stress learning environments. Simultaneously, policymakers may implement curriculum reforms that emphasize collaborative learning, establish peer-mentoring systems, and provide workshops on stress management and oral communication skills development.

## Literature Review

Oral communication is a vital skill in today's globalized world, serving as a key medium for conveying thoughts, emotions, knowledge, and ideas. As the demand for international engagement in education and employment continues to grow, the ability to communicate effectively in English, a global lingua franca, has become increasingly important (Alkhaldi et al., 2023; Mar, 2020). English proficiency encompasses four primary skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking is widely considered the most challenging because it demands not only mastery of linguistic elements such as grammar and vocabulary but also an awareness of the cultural expectations and social norms that shape verbal exchanges (Ice-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000).

For graduate students, particularly those pursuing studies abroad, effective oral communication is indispensable. It supports academic achievement through class participation and presentations, and also facilitates professional success by enabling clear interpersonal communication and public speaking (Dansieh et al., 2021). Despite early English exposure in their educational backgrounds, many university students from Myanmar continue to struggle with oral fluency. This difficulty largely stems from limited speaking practice and a curriculum heavily skewed toward reading and writing, which traditionally define English education in Myanmar (Tun, 2020).

Moreover, Myanmar's educational system has long been characterized by a teacher-centred, lecture-based approach that prioritizes memorization over interaction. Such an approach restricts students' opportunities for verbal expression, leaving them underprepared for communicative tasks in higher education and professional contexts. According to Welch and Hayden (2013), students who attend elite private or international institutions may have better access to interactive instruction. However, the vast majority, especially those from rural areas, face persistent challenges such as low self-confidence, fear of speaking, and overall communication apprehension when required to interact in English abroad.

In recent years, the emphasis on oral communication has intensified for Myanmar students, especially those seeking educational opportunities overseas. This shift is driven by the global academic and workplace expectation that students possess not just theoretical knowledge but also the ability to express it verbally. However, many students continue to face Oral Communication Apprehension (Oca), a psychological condition characterised by anxiety or fear associated with speaking, particularly in public or academic settings (McCroskey, 1984).

The root causes of OCA are numerous and include fear of negative evaluation, inadequate speaking practice, and discomfort in unfamiliar or high-pressure social contexts. These global causes are compounded in Myanmar by culturally specific dynamics such

as rigid educational hierarchies, emphasis on rote learning, and norms of indirect communication that discourage assertive self-expression (San & Htwe, 2023). The result is a pervasive anxiety among Myanmar graduate students, especially those studying abroad, who often feel ill-equipped to speak confidently in English.

Oral communication is defined as the exchange of information using spoken words and sometimes visual cues (Prabavathi & Nagasubramani, 2018). This skill is crucial not only for academic achievement but also for career advancement and social mobility (McCartney & Patterson, 2021; Mar, 2020). For Myanmar graduate students, developing fluency and reducing apprehension in English speaking is particularly critical, given its direct link to their performance in seminars, conferences, and job interviews. According to Butler et al. (2021), students experiencing OCA are often hesitant to speak in group discussions, deliver presentations, or articulate their views clearly, all of which can hinder their academic progress.

OCA is not just a language issue but also a mental health and well-being concern. It can affect a student's confidence, self-esteem, and classroom engagement, and in more severe cases, may lead to withdrawal from interactive academic tasks. Agrawal and Krishna (2021) stress that high levels of communication anxiety can negatively impact both mental health and academic outcomes.

For Myanmar students in graduate programs, overcoming OCA is imperative for integrating into the global academic environment and preparing for international careers.

Research into OCA has shown that a blend of psychological, cultural, and pedagogical factors influences it. In Myanmar's context, these are uniquely intertwined. Mar (2020) notes that the country's cultural norms, grounded in collectivism, respect for elders, and avoidance of confrontation, contribute to students' reluctance to speak up. Even students with reasonable English competence may hesitate to participate in class or speak to professors due to fear of making mistakes or offending authority figures. Despite the urgency of addressing this issue, limited research has focused on Myanmar graduate students abroad, especially in countries like Thailand, where many pursue higher education.

Historically, Myanmar's complex linguistic and political history has also shaped its English education landscape. English was first introduced during the colonial period as the language of administration and education (Aye, 2020). However, after independence in 1948 and subsequent political upheavals, English lost its status as a primary medium of instruction and was relegated to a secondary school subject. This downgrade led to a significant shift toward a nationalized education system that emphasized the Burmese language and minimized the role of English, particularly in spoken forms (Welch & Hayden, 2013).

In the 1980s, efforts were made to reintroduce English as a compulsory subject from kindergarten, especially in fields like science and economics (Kam, 2002). Nevertheless, these reforms often lacked comprehensive implementation and were undermined by outdated methodologies. English instruction in many schools remained exam-focused, heavily reliant on translation and grammar drills, with little to no space for real-time interaction or communicative tasks (Lin, 2021). Even with growing demand for English proficiency due to globalization and economic reforms post-2010, both teachers and students in Myanmar continue to face challenges in oral fluency (Suriya, 2019).

As the country opens up economically and politically, English has increasingly been recognized as a valuable form of "human capital" that enhances employment opportunities, income levels, and international mobility (Mar 2020). However, most students still lack meaningful access to high-quality English education, particularly in speaking. Private language institutes have emerged to fill this gap, but access remains limited for rural and low-income populations (Low & Ao, 2018).

The recent political crisis in Myanmar has further exacerbated these educational inequalities. With domestic institutions disrupted, many students have sought higher education abroad, especially in nearby countries like Thailand, where they can find more stable and resource-rich learning environments (Phyu & Siriwato, 2022). For these students, integrating into an international academic setting requires not only academic competence but also confidence in oral communication. In this area, many feel underprepared due to their prior educational experiences.

Culture also plays a pivotal role in shaping communication behavior. Unlike individualistic societies where self-expression is encouraged and speaking out is seen as a sign of leadership, Myanmar's collectivist culture values humility, social harmony, and deference to authority

(San & Htwe, 2023). These cultural norms often discourage students from voicing their opinions, especially in settings that involve professors or large audiences. Such tendencies significantly contribute to OCA and make it difficult for Myanmar students to adjust to academic environments that reward active participation and verbal engagement.

While a few international studies have explored the causes and effects of OCA across student populations, from medical students in Iran to engineering students in Brazil, the specific challenges faced by Myanmar graduate students studying abroad have been largely overlooked (Thaher, 2005; Mobarak, 2020; Jalleh et al., 2021; Rimkeeratikul, 2016). These students, despite facing similar anxiety-inducing academic contexts, must also navigate cultural, psychological, and systemic barriers that are deeply rooted in Myanmar's socio-educational fabric. For instance, the fear of "losing face" by making mistakes in public is particularly acute in collectivist societies.

It often prevents students from taking the risks necessary to improve their speaking skills (Ibna Seraj et al., 2021).

### **Oral Communication**

Recent research on graduate students' oral communication highlights the essential need for strong communicative competencies to meet academic and professional demands. Li (2020) emphasizes, based on graduate employment survey data, the increasing importance of enhancing college students' oral expression abilities to align with workforce expectations. Similarly, Chidambaram et al. (2020) argue that while technical expertise is crucial in engineering education, persuasive communication skills are equally important for professional success. Evseev (2021) addresses the challenges graduate students face in mastering business communication in a foreign language, focusing on improving their business correspondence skills. Yin (2022) introduces an innovative approach by integrating embedded microprocessor technology into oral English instruction to improve students' intercultural communication competence.

Additionally, Yoel et al. (2022) explore the impact of online courses on the interpersonal communication skills of graduate students in STEM fields, emphasizing the role of digital learning environments in communication training. Wei (2022) examines the experiences of Chinese EFL postgraduate students with public speaking anxiety, particularly its effect on their performance at international academic conferences. Together, these studies underscore that oral communication proficiency is a fundamental attribute for graduates, with various strategies and instructional methods being explored to tackle existing challenges and enhance students' communicative competence across educational contexts.

### **Oral communication apprehension**

Practical oral communication skills are essential in various contexts, including tertiary education, postgraduate education, the workplace, and business environments (Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012). McCroskey (1984) identified four communication contexts that can lead to apprehension: group discussions, meetings, conversations, and public speaking, collectively referred to as oral communication apprehension. In group discussions, participants use spoken language to address different issues (McCroskey, 1986). Engaging in these discussions can significantly benefit individuals by enhancing their understanding and retention of the concepts being explored (Young & Henquinet, 2000, cited in Jalleh et al., 2021). Additionally, group discussions promote creativity as members collaborate to generate ideas (Sunwolf, 2002). For second language (L2) learners, these discussions are particularly valuable for improving communication skills and building self-confidence (Bakar & Latif, 2010, cited in Jalleh et al., 2021).

Meetings serve as another context for oral communication, where participants convene to discuss specific problems, issues, or matters of importance (Harris & Sherblom, 2018). According to Sabri & Qin (2014), activities similar to meetings facilitate face-to-face interactions among L2 learners, allowing them to practice their oral communication skills (cited in Jalleh et al., 2021).

The fourth context identified by McCroskey (1984) is public speaking, which involves sharing ideas verbally with an audience. Within these four contexts, many individuals experience challenges related to oral communication apprehension, defined by McCroskey (1977) as the fear or anxiety encountered during actual or anticipated communication situations (cited in Rauf et al., 2021). Rauf et al. (2021) note that one major contributor to poor communication skills is communication anxiety, which stems from fear, worry, and a lack of confidence in interactions with others, ultimately hindering effective communication. Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) refers explicitly to the anxiety or fear associated with verbal communication, which may also involve the use of visual aids.

### **The Role of English in Myanmar**

Kachru's (1989) model classifies countries that use English into three categories: the Expanding Circle, where English is learned as a foreign language, and the Outer Circle, where English serves as an official or second language, as seen in countries like India and Singapore (cited in Tin, 2013). Although Myanmar was previously a British colony, Kirkpatrick (2008) argues that it better fits within the Expanding Circle due to its current usage of English (Tin, 2013). After gaining independence in 1948, Burmese replaced English as the official language, and English was designated as a foreign language taught starting from the fifth grade (Aye, 2020; Tin, 2014). In the 1980s, policies were introduced to make English a compulsory subject from kindergarten, especially in science and economics (Kam, 2002).

Myanmar's long-standing political isolation has restricted its integration into global networks; however, reforms since 2010 have created more opportunities for English education (Suriya, 2019). Despite these advancements, challenges persist. English proficiency remains limited among both students and teachers due to outdated, exam-focused teaching methods that prioritize reading and writing over speaking and listening skills (Lin, 2021). The absence of communicative language teaching and inadequate teacher training have exacerbated these issues (Suriya, 2019).

As Myanmar shifts toward a more open economy, English proficiency is increasingly recognized as essential human capital (Mar, 2020). Improved English skills are associated with better employment opportunities and competitiveness in the global job market. Nevertheless, English is primarily taught in schools, with few native speakers teaching it as

their first language at home (Low, 2018). In response to the rising demand for English proficiency, private language schools have emerged to bridge the gap between academic instruction and practical communication needs.

### **Previous studies related to oral communication apprehension**

Several studies have investigated oral communication apprehension (OCA) in various academic contexts and among different student populations. Rasakumaran and Devi (2017) examined OCA levels among first-year medical students at the Faculty of Medicine, Sri Lanka University. Their study utilized the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) and included 24 students (9 males and 15 females) along with semi-structured interviews. The results indicated a moderate level of apprehension, with female students reporting higher levels of OCA.

Similarly, Hashemi et al. (2020) explored communication anxiety among 340 paramedical and medical students at Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences in Iran. This study found that students frequently felt anxious and hesitant to participate in classroom discussions, highlighting the prevalence of communication anxiety in medical education. Previous literature has suggested that foreign language anxiety (FLA) adversely affects language learning outcomes, as anxious learners are less likely to engage in communicative activities and may struggle with language comprehension and retention (Desta, 2020).

Focusing on EFL learners in Malaysia, Jalleh et al. (2021) conducted a study on Japanese EFL international students participating in a language immersion program. Using the PRCA-24, the researchers found that students experienced high levels of OCA, particularly during group discussions and conversations, while meetings and public speaking also triggered significant apprehension.

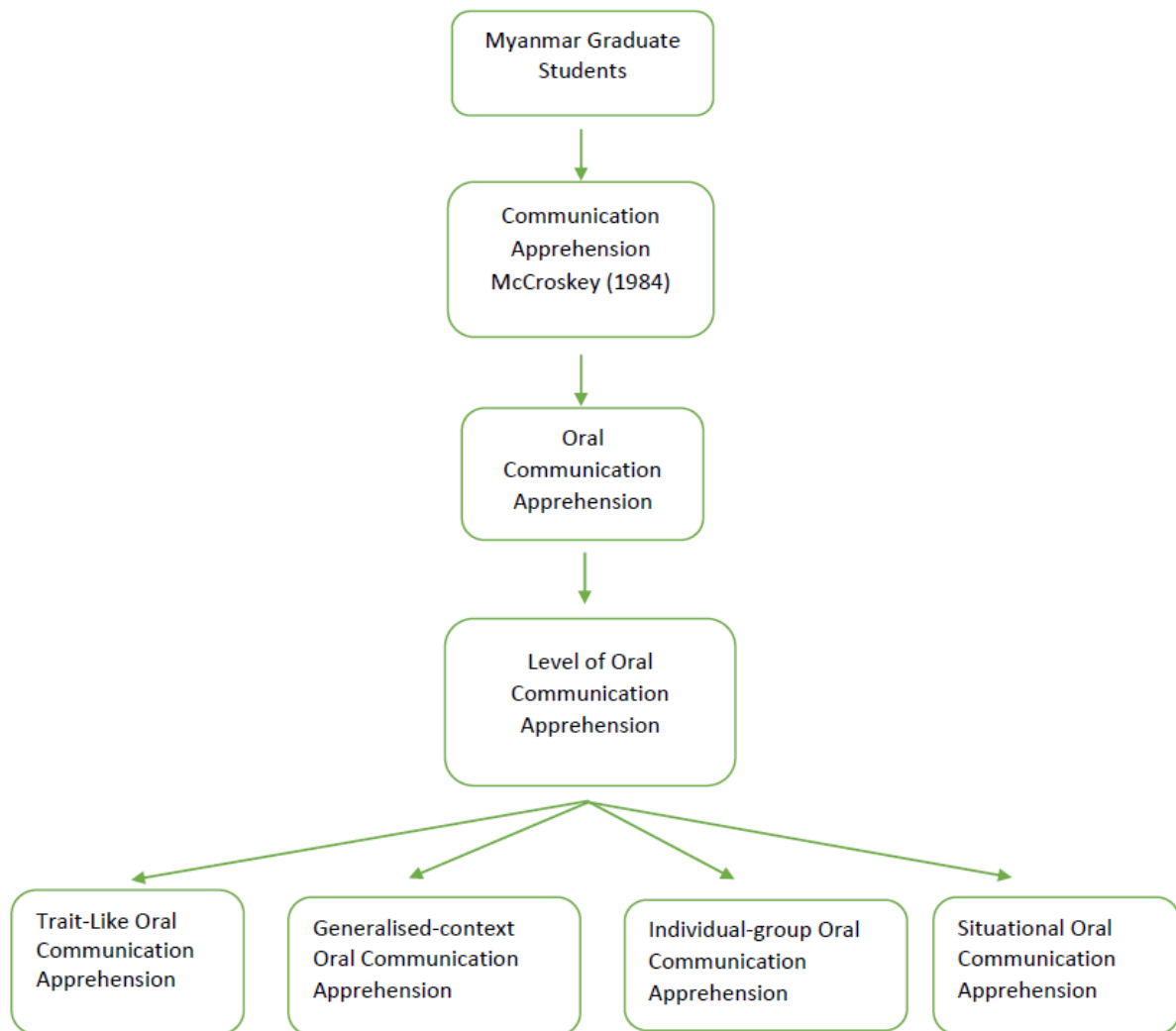
In Thailand, Rimkeeratikul (2016) investigated communication apprehension among first-year and second-year students in a Master's program focused on English for international communication. The findings indicated that students exhibited moderate levels of OCA across four communication contexts, with no significant difference between the two academic years.

### **Theoretical Framework**

McCroskey (1977, p. 78) defined communication apprehension (CA) as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." Building on this foundation, Byrne and Marann (2012) categorized CA into two types: oral communication apprehension (OCA) and written communication apprehension (WCA). This study focuses explicitly on OCA among Myanmar graduate students. McCroskey (1982) further distinguished between trait CA and state CA, and later, McCroskey (1984) expanded the concept into four dimensions: trait-like CA, generalised-context CA, individual-group CA, and situational CA.

Trait-like CA is characterised as a stable personality trait, where individuals experience communication anxiety across various contexts, audiences, and settings (McCroskey, 1984). Such individuals often avoid communication situations, as CA becomes ingrained in their daily lives (Dwyer, 1995). Generalised-context CA, on the other hand, refers to anxiety triggered by specific communication situations, such as public speaking, meetings, small group discussions, or dyadic interactions (McCroskey, 1984). Individual-group CA encompasses apprehension related to specific individuals or groups, independent of broader personality traits or context-based tendencies (McCroskey, 1984). Lastly, situational CA arises from particular communication scenarios that combine unique audience and context factors, making it a temporary yet significant form of apprehension (McCroskey, 1984).

Previous research supports the relevance of this model in diverse contexts. Rasakumaran and Devi (2017) found moderate levels of CA among Sri Lankan medical students, with females reporting higher levels of apprehension, highlighting the influence of individual factors, such as gender, on CA. Similarly, Jalleh et al. (2021) and Rimkeeratikul (2016) emphasized the context-specific nature of CA among Japanese and Thai students, respectively, noting that group discussions and formal academic settings elicited heightened levels of anxiety. These findings align with McCroskey's assertion that the interaction of individual predispositions and situational context shapes communication apprehension.



**Figure 1:** The conceptual Framework

## Research Methodology

This study utilised a quantitative research approach to examine the level of English oral communication apprehension (OCA) among Myanmar graduate students enrolled in international programs at two universities in Thailand. The primary instrument for assessing OCA was the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), developed by McCroskey (1984), which evaluates apprehension across four communication contexts: Trait-like OCA, general context OCA, individual-group OCA, and situational OCA.

### Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of Myanmar graduate students enrolled in international programs at universities in Thailand. Specifically, data were collected from two institutions: A University, a private university with English as the medium of instruction, and

B University, a public university with a significant enrollment of Myanmar graduate students in its international programs. A total of 100 participants were selected using snowball sampling, with 50 students from each university. Snowball sampling was chosen due to its effectiveness in reaching specific groups through referrals, particularly within a defined community such as Myanmar graduate students studying abroad.

### Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines from planning through to publication. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the study's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Participants' responses were anonymized, securely stored, and accessible only to the researcher. Interviews were conducted respectfully and supportively, allowing participants to skip questions or stop the interview if they felt uncomfortable. The study received ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board. Throughout the research, we maintained integrity in data analysis and reporting, ensuring confidentiality, transparency, and minimizing researcher bias.

### Research Instrument

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), developed by McCroskey (2005), was used for quantitative research in this study as it is the most widely recognised instrument for measuring communication apprehension. To ensure cultural and linguistic relevance, the PRCA-24 was adapted to reflect the indirect communication style and educational context of Myanmar graduate students. Modifications were made to specific items while preserving the instrument's core structure, by McCroskey's recommendations, to maintain validity across different cultural settings. To validate content relevance, the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was conducted. The PRCA-24 consists of 24 Likert-scale items, allowing for the efficient and reliable assessment of communication apprehension across multiple contexts, making it suitable for large-scale academic research (Aisyah et al., 2019; Kenza, 2024).

### Data Analysis

The PRCA-24 responses were collected through Google Forms and reviewed to ensure data quality. The dataset was screened to eliminate missing, incomplete, or duplicate entries. Scoring was conducted according to McCroskey's standardised procedure, summing individual scores to determine each participant's overall level of oral communication apprehension (OCA). Based on the total scores, participants were categorised into three levels of apprehension: low, moderate, or high. Descriptive statistical analyses were employed to summarise the distribution of OCA levels among the participants. Measures of central tendency (mean), dispersion (standard deviation), and frequency distributions were calculated

to provide a comprehensive overview of the data. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software to ensure accuracy and reliability in the findings.

## Results and Discussion

### Level of English Oral Communication Apprehension Among Myanmar's Graduate Students in Thailand

This section reports the findings of the research question (What is the level of English oral communication apprehension among Myanmar's graduate students in Thailand?). Data were gathered using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), a standardised tool based on McCroskey's (1984) Oral Communication Apprehension Theory. This instrument assesses four dimensions of OCA: trait-like, situational, individual-group, and generalised-context apprehension, each addressing different facets of communication anxiety in both academic and social settings. Table 1 presents a summary of the overall OCA levels. The mean score was  $M = 2.91$  ( $SD = 0.95$ ), indicating a moderate level of oral communication apprehension among the participants. Trait-like OCA, which reflects a person's persistent tendency to experience communication anxiety, had a mean of  $M = 2.71$  ( $SD = 0.10$ ). Situational OCA, which pertains to context-specific anxiety, showed a slightly higher mean of  $M = 3.03$  ( $SD = 0.95$ ). Likewise, Individual-group OCA recorded a mean of  $M = 2.90$  ( $SD = 0.95$ ), and Generalized-context OCA had a mean of  $M = 2.98$  ( $SD = 0.90$ ), both indicating moderate levels of apprehension.

**Table 1** Overall Level of Students' Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA)

Item	Statement	M	S.D.	Interpretation
1	Overall Trait-like OCA	2.71	0.10	Moderate
2	Overall Situational OCA	3.03	0.95	Moderate
3	Overall Individual-group OCA	2.90	0.95	Moderate
4	Overall Generalized- Context OCA	2.98	0.90	Moderate
	<b>Overall OCA</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

### Level of English oral communication apprehension among Myanmar's graduate students in Thailand based on Trait-Like Oral Communication Apprehension

In Table 2, the study focused on the Trait-like Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) dimension, which indicates students' consistent tendency to feel anxious in oral communication situations, especially during group discussions. Descriptive statistics for this dimension can be found in the Table.

**Table 2** Level Of English Oral Communication Apprehension Among Myanmar's Graduate Students in Thailand Based on Trait-Like Oral Communication Apprehension

Item	Statement	M	S.D.	Interpretation
<b>Trait-like OCA</b>				
1	I dislike participating in group discussions.	2.68	1.11	Moderate
2	Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.	2.36	0.89	Low
3	I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.	3.02	1.04	Moderate
4	I like to get involved in group discussions.	2.29	0.80	Low
5	Engaging in group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.	3.44	1.11	Moderate
6	I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.	2.54	0.92	Moderate
<b>Overall</b>		<b>2.71</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

The overall mean score for Trait-like Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) was  $M = 2.71$  ( $SD = 0.10$ ), indicating a moderate level of apprehension among Myanmar graduate students. This suggests that while students do not experience severe anxiety, they often feel discomfort during group interactions. Among the six items, Item 5 ("Engaging in group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous") had the highest mean score ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), highlighting that unfamiliar social situations significantly increase students' anxiety. This finding aligns with McCroskey's (1984) concept of situational trait anxiety, which posits that new group dynamics heighten communication apprehension. Items 1 ("I dislike participating in group discussions",  $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) and Item 3 ("I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions",  $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) also reflected moderate scores, indicating a tendency toward avoidance and nervousness in group settings.

In contrast, Items 2 ("Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions",  $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) and Item 4 ("I like to get involved in group discussions",  $M = 2.29$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ) received low ratings, suggesting that students do not view themselves as confident or enthusiastic participants. These low scores indicate a reluctance to engage rather than a sense of comfort. Item 6 ("I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions") also showed a moderate mean ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ), reinforcing the overall finding of moderate yet persistent discomfort during group interactions.

These results indicate that Myanmar graduate students exhibit moderate trait-like communication apprehension, particularly in situations involving unfamiliar peers. Cultural factors, such as Myanmar's teacher-centred learning environments and emphasis on respectful silence (Tun, 2020; San & Htwe, 2023), may contribute to this cautious approach to group discussions. The findings highlight the need for instructional strategies that gradually build students' confidence in oral participation. Incorporating collaborative activities in

low-pressure settings could help reduce apprehension and foster a more interactive learning environment.

**Level Of English Oral Communication Apprehension Among Myanmar’s Graduate Students in Thailand Based on Situational Oral Communication Apprehension**

Situational Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) refers to the anxiety that arises in specific contexts during communication events, such as oral presentations or formal meetings.

This is particularly evident when the stakes are high, the topics are unfamiliar, or authority figures are present (McCroskey, 1984). Descriptive statistics for this dimension are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3** Level of English Oral Communication Apprehension Among Myanmar’s Graduate Students in Thailand Based on Situational Oral Communication Apprehension

Item	Statement	M	S.D.	Interpretation
<b>Situational OCA</b>				
7	Generally, I am nervous when I have to do an oral presentation.	3.29	0.98	Moderate
8	Usually, I am comfortable when I have to do an oral presentation.	2.73	0.83	Moderate
9	I remain calm and relaxed when called upon to express an opinion at a meeting, unless it is a high-stakes situation or involves senior colleagues.	2.89	1.09	Moderate
10	I am afraid to express myself at meetings, particularly when I do not feel prepared or when the meeting involves unfamiliar topics.	3.60	0.96	High
11	Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable, especially when I am asked unexpected questions or speak in a formal setting.	3.26	0.96	Moderate
12	I remain very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting, unless it is a stressful or time-sensitive situation.	2.45	0.90	Low
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.03</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Among Myanmar graduate students in Thailand, the overall mean score for this dimension was  $M = 3.03$  ( $SD = 0.95$ ), indicating a moderate level of situational apprehension. The highest mean score was observed for Item 10 (“I am afraid to express myself at meetings, particularly when I don’t feel prepared or when the meeting involves unfamiliar topics”), with  $M = 3.60$  ( $SD = 0.96$ ). This suggests that students experience considerable anxiety in unpredictable academic situations, highlighting their strong sensitivity to preparation and familiarity with content. These findings may reflect cultural factors, including fear of negative evaluation and a preference for structured interactions.

Moderate levels of anxiety were also noted in other items, such as apprehension during oral presentations ( $M = 3.10$ ) and speaking up in formal meetings ( $M = 3.15$ ). In contrast, Item 12 (“I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting unless it’s a stressful or time-sensitive situation”) received the lowest mean score ( $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ), indicating that students feel more comfortable in casual or familiar settings but become anxious under pressure.

Overall, these findings underscore that situational factors—such as topic familiarity, the formality of the setting, and the presence of authority figures—significantly impact students’ oral communication apprehension. This aligns with McCroskey’s (1984) situational CA theory and supports existing literature on how academic pressures and cultural norms influence communication behaviors in high-context societies like Myanmar.

#### **Level Of English Oral Communication Apprehension Among Myanmar’s Graduate Students in Thailand Based on Individual-Group Oral Communication Apprehension**

Table 4 presents the study’s focus on the Individual-Group Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) dimension, which reflects students’ consistent tendency to experience anxiety in oral communication situations, particularly during group discussions. Descriptive statistics for this dimension are provided in the Table.

**Table 4** Level of English Oral Communication Apprehension Among Myanmar’s Graduate Students in Thailand Based on Individual-Group Oral Communication Apprehension

Item	Statement	M	S.D.	Interpretation
<b>Individual-Group OCA</b>				
13	While participating in a group discussion, I feel very nervous.	3.04	1.01	Moderate
14	I have no fear of speaking up in group discussions or meetings.	2.73	0.97	Moderate
15	Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in group settings.	3.10	0.95	Moderate
16	Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in group discussions.	2.70	0.92	Moderate
17	While conversing in group settings, I feel very relaxed.	2.65	0.80	Moderate

Item	Statement	M	S.D.	Interpretation
18	I am afraid to speak up in group discussions.	3.15	1.03	Moderate
<b>Overall</b>		<b>2.90</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

The analysis of Individual-Group Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) among Myanmar graduate students reveals a moderate level of anxiety, with an overall mean score of  $M = 2.90$  ( $SD = 0.95$ ). This indicates that students tend to feel apprehensive during group discussions, team presentations, and academic seminars. The highest mean score was recorded for Item 18 (“I’m afraid to speak up in group discussions”), which received a score of  $M = 3.15$  ( $SD = 1.03$ ). This suggests a significant hesitation among students to contribute publicly in peer settings. Similarly, Item 13 (“While participating in a group discussion, I feel very nervous”) scored  $M = 3.04$  ( $SD = 1.01$ ), and Item 15 (“Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in group settings”) had a mean of  $M = 3.10$  ( $SD = 0.95$ ), further indicating a consistent level of discomfort during group interactions.

Conversely, items associated with calmness, such as Item 16 (“Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in group discussions”) with  $M = 2.70$  ( $SD = 0.92$ ) and Item 17 (“I feel very relaxed while conversing in group settings”) with  $M = 2.65$  ( $SD = 0.80$ ), also fell within the moderate range. This suggests that students do not commonly experience relaxation during group communication. Even the positively phrased Item 14 (“I have no fear of speaking up in group discussions or meetings”) received a modest mean score of  $M = 2.73$  ( $SD = 0.97$ ), indicating that few students feel genuinely confident in group interactions. These findings highlight a persistent yet moderate level of group communication apprehension, suggesting that while students can participate, they do so with discomfort. This unease may stem from Myanmar’s traditional education system, which emphasises passive learning and discourages open verbal interaction (San & Htwe, 2023). Additionally, cultural norms regarding deference to authority and fear of making public mistakes further exacerbate this reluctance.

#### **Level of English oral communication apprehension among Myanmar’s graduate students in Thailand based on Generalised-context Oral Communication Apprehension**

**Table 5** Level of English Oral Communication Apprehension Among Myanmar’s Graduate Students

Item	Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
<b>Generalized-Context OCA</b>				
19	I have no fear of giving a speech.	2.74	0.90	Moderate
20	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.	3.35	0.91	Moderate
21	I feel relaxed while giving a speech.	2.64	0.87	Moderate

22	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.	3.28	0.94	Moderate
23	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.	2.55	0.75	Moderate
24	While giving a speech, I get so nervous that I forget facts I know.	3.33	0.97	Moderate
<b>Overall</b>		<b>2.98</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

The analysis of Generalised-Context Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) among graduate students in Myanmar reveals a moderate level of anxiety, with an overall mean score of  $M = 2.98$  ( $SD = 0.90$ ). According to McCroskey (1984), generalised-context OCA reflects a person's consistent tendency to feel apprehensive in specific communicative contexts, such as public speaking, regardless of the audience or topic. The findings indicate that students experience noticeable tension during formal speaking situations. The highest levels of apprehension were associated with physiological and cognitive symptoms, particularly in high-pressure contexts. Item 20 ("Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech") recorded the highest mean score at  $M = 3.35$  ( $SD = 0.91$ ), followed closely by Item 24 ("While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I know") at  $M = 3.33$  ( $SD = 0.97$ ), and Item 22 ("My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech") at  $M = 3.28$  ( $SD = 0.94$ ). These results align with McCroskey's conceptualisation of OCA, which includes psychological discomfort, physiological arousal, and cognitive disorganisation during formal communication tasks.

Conversely, positively worded items reflecting self-perceived confidence and calmness during speeches displayed lower mean scores, still within the moderate range. Item 19 ("I have no fear of giving a speech") had a mean of  $M = 2.74$  ( $SD = 0.90$ ), followed by Item 21 ("I feel relaxed while giving a speech") at  $M = 2.64$  ( $SD = 0.87$ ), and Item 23 ("I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence") with the lowest mean of  $M = 2.55$  ( $SD = 0.75$ ). These results indicate that while students do not suffer from severe speech anxiety, they also lack complete confidence, reflecting a cautious approach to public speaking.

Overall, the moderate scores for both anxiety and confidence-related items illustrate a balance between discomfort and functional participation. Students can deliver speeches, but they experience physical tension, mental blocks, and hesitation, particularly in evaluative or formal settings. Cultural factors, such as Myanmar's emphasis on modesty and avoidance of public mistakes, may further contribute to these trends, reinforcing students' cautious engagement in high-stakes communicative events. These findings highlight the need for structured public speaking practice in low-pressure environments and the incorporation of confidence-building strategies into academic programs to alleviate apprehension and enhance students' oral communication skills.

## Conclusion

This study explored the level of English oral communication apprehension (OCA) among Myanmar graduate students studying in Thailand and examined its dimensions through McCroskey's PRCA-24 framework. The findings revealed that students exhibited moderate levels of apprehension across all four dimensions: trait-like, situational, individual-group, and generalized-context OCA. These results highlight that while students are not paralyzed by fear, they consistently experience discomfort, particularly in unfamiliar or high-pressure situations such as oral presentations, group discussions with unfamiliar peers, and formal academic meetings. Cultural factors, including Myanmar's hierarchical and teacher-centered educational traditions, contribute significantly to students' reluctance to speak up, along with fear of negative evaluation and limited speaking opportunities in prior education.

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. For educators, there is a pressing need to create inclusive, interactive, and low-anxiety classroom environments that gradually build students' oral confidence. For policymakers and curriculum developers, incorporating communicative activities and peer-supported speaking tasks into academic programs is essential. Furthermore, structured public speaking workshops and stress-reduction initiatives can address students' cognitive and physiological anxiety symptoms.

Ultimately, addressing English oral communication apprehension among Myanmar graduate students is critical to their academic success and integration into global academic and professional settings. Future research could expand the sample size and incorporate qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into students' lived experiences. This study provides a foundational understanding and calls for systemic changes to foster a more supportive environment for English language learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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