บทความวิจัย (Research Article)

English Presentation Anxiety of Thai EFL Undergraduate Students

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความวิตกกังวลในการนำเสนอเป็นภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีชาวไทยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ โดยใช้การวิจัยแบบผสมผสานเชิงคู่ขนาน กลุ่มตัวอย่างคือนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 2 จำนวน 105 คน ที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการนำเสนอ โดยใช้แบบสอบถาม Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) ในการเก็บข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณ และคัดเลือกผู้เข้าร่วม 15 คน เพื่อสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผู้เข้าร่วมมีระดับความวิตกกังวลค่อนข้างสูง (M = 123.14) โดยร้อยละ 90.48 มีความวิตกกังวลระดับปานกลางถึงสูง เมื่อพิจารณาเป็นรายองค์ประกอบ พบว่าความวิตกกังวลก่อนการนำเสนอมีค่าเฉลี่ยสูงที่สุด (M = 3.55) รองลงมาคืออาการทางกาย (M = 3.51) และการขาดการควบคุมขณะนำเสนอ (M = 3.00) สาเหตุหลักของความวิตกกังวลคือการรับรู้ความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของตนเอง (ร้อยละ 46.67) ผลการวิเคราะห์เชิงคุณภาพพบว่าความวิตกกังวลส่งผลทั้งในมิติการรู้คิด อารมณ์ และพฤติกรรม โดยปัจจัยทางวัฒนธรรม โดยเฉพาะการรักษาหน้าและความเกรงใจ มีบทบาทเสริมให้ความวิตกกังวลทวีความรุนแรงขึ้น ผลการวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่าการจัดการความวิตกกังวลในการนำเสนอของนักศึกษาไทยจำเป็นต้องคำนึงถึงมิติทางวัฒนธรรมควบคู่กับมิติทางจิตวิทยา

คำสำคัญ: ความวิตกกังวลในการนำเสนอ ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ การรักษาหน้า

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(**Received:** 19 February 2026; **Revised:** 4 May 2026**; Accepted:** 12 May 2026)

Abstract

This study investigated English presentation anxiety among Thai EFL undergraduate students using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. A total of 105 second-year students enrolled in an English for Presentation course completed the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA), and 15 participants were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Results revealed that participants experienced moderately high anxiety levels (M = 123.14), with 90.48% reporting moderate to high anxiety. Anticipatory anxiety was most prominent (M = 3.55), followed by physiological symptoms (M = 3.51) and lack of control during performance (M = 3.00). The primary source of anxiety was students' self-perceived English language ability (46.67%). Qualitative findings revealed that anxiety manifested through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, with cultural factors—particularly face-saving concerns and the concept of "kreng jai"—intensifying the anxiety experience. The findings suggest that presentation anxiety in Thai EFL contexts requires culturally responsive interventions addressing both psychological and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: Presentation Anxiety, English as a foreign language (EFL), Face-saving

Introduction

English oral presentation skills have become essential competencies for EFL students in today's globalized academic and professional environments (Wu, 2024; Zarei et al., 2024). For Thai undergraduate students, these skills are particularly crucial as Thailand's integration into the ASEAN Economic Community demands proficient English communication abilities across professional domains (Kalra & Siribud, 2020). However, the intersection of public speaking anxiety and foreign language use creates complex psychological challenges that significantly impede learning outcomes (Tian & Mahmud, 2018).

Foreign language anxiety (FLA), as conceptualized by Horwitz, et al. (1986), represents a distinct form of situational anxiety occurring specifically in foreign

language learning contexts. This anxiety manifests through communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, with oral presentations representing particularly anxiety-provoking situations where all three components—communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation—converge (Cheng et al., 1999). While recent empirical research in broader EFL contexts has documented that over 70% of participants demonstrate moderate to high anxiety levels (Abrar et al., 2018; Nuraeni et al., 2024; Quvanch et al., 2024), these findings predominantly derive from non-Thai educational settings. The extent to which such patterns hold in the Thai EFL context—where distinct cultural values such as face-saving and kreng jai may amplify anxiety—remains insufficiently examined using presentation-specific instruments.

It is important to distinguish between the theoretical framework of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and the measurement instrument employed in this study. FLCA, as conceptualized by Horwitz, et al. (1986), provides a broad theoretical lens encompassing communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation across diverse language learning situations. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) measures this general construct. In contrast, the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) (McCroskey, 1970) specifically targets public speaking anxiety through three distinct components: anticipatory anxiety, physiological symptoms, and lack of control during performance. The present study is positioned within the FLCA theoretical framework but employs the PRPSA as a more contextually appropriate instrument for investigating presentation-specific anxiety, as it captures the multidimensional nature of anxiety across different phases of the presentation experience (Bartholomay & Houlihan, 2016; Kelsen, 2019).

The measurement of presentation anxiety has been significantly advanced through McCroskey's (1970) Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA), which assesses three distinct but interrelated components: anticipatory anxiety (pre-presentation worry and apprehension), physiological symptoms (bodily

manifestations of anxiety), and lack of control during performance (cognitive disruption and loss of composure during presentations). This multidimensional approach provides comprehensive understanding of how anxiety operates across different phases of the presentation experience, from preparation through actual performance.

In Asian EFL contexts, presentation anxiety appears particularly pronounced due to cultural and educational factors (Wu, 2024). Recent studies with Thai learners have revealed specific challenges in presentation contexts. Cedar and Jaiyote (2024) discovered that Thai university English majors exhibited high levels of fear of negative evaluation, with second-year students showing higher anxiety levels than fourth-year students.

Research on presentation anxiety in Thai EFL contexts has primarily focused on overall anxiety levels without detailed examination of specific anxiety components or their manifestations (Cedar & Jaiyote, 2024; Kalra & Siribud, 2020; Thaksanan, 2024). While studies have identified general anxiety patterns, there remains limited investigation of how anticipatory anxiety, physiological symptoms, and performance-related control issues specifically affect Thai EFL learners during English presentations (Tian & Mahmud, 2018; Woodrow, 2006). Additionally, most existing research has employed quantitative approaches (Cedar & Jaiyote, 2024; Kurakan, 2021) without incorporating qualitative insights that could provide deeper understanding of student experiences and the cultural factors influencing anxiety manifestations.

Current literature demonstrates several critical gaps that limit our understanding of presentation anxiety among Thai EFL undergraduate students. First, there is insufficient comprehensive investigation of presentation-specific anxiety components using validated instruments like the PRPSA in Thai EFL contexts, with most studies focusing on general speaking anxiety rather than the multidimensional nature of presentation anxiety (Thaksanan, 2024; Kalra & Siribud, 2020). Second, mixed-methods research that integrates quantitative anxiety

measurement with qualitative exploration of student experiences and cultural factors remains notably absent in Thai EFL presentation contexts (Cedar & Jaiyote, 2024; Kurakan, 2021). Third, systematic examination of how different anxiety components (anticipatory, physiological, and performance-related) specifically manifest among Thai undergraduate students is lacking (Woodrow, 2006; Abrar et al., 2018), limiting the development of targeted interventions. Finally, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the sources and manifestations of presentation anxiety from the perspective of Thai EFL learners themselves (Wu, 2024), restricting the development of culturally responsive pedagogical approaches.

The present study addresses these gaps by extending previous research in two key ways. First, while Cedar and Jaiyote (2024) examined fear of negative evaluation and Kurakan (2021) focused on engineering students using descriptive statistics, neither study employed a mixed-methods approach to capture both the measurable dimensions and the lived experiences of presentation anxiety. By combining PRPSA component analysis with qualitative exploration of cultural factors such as face-saving and kreng jai, this study provides a more comprehensive account of presentation anxiety in the Thai EFL context, contributing both empirical evidence and culturally grounded insights for pedagogical intervention.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the levels and component profiles of English presentation anxiety among Thai EFL undergraduate students.
2. To explore the sources and manifestations of presentation anxiety experienced by Thai EFL undergraduate students.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on English presentation anxiety among Thai EFL undergraduate students enrolled in English presentation courses at a public university in southern Thailand. The population comprised second-year students from three class sections during the academic year 2024. The study examined

presentation anxiety using two instruments: the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) for quantitative measurement of anxiety levels and components, and semi-structured interviews for qualitative exploration of anxiety sources and manifestations. The convergent parallel mixed-methods design integrated quantitative and qualitative findings during interpretation to provide comprehensive understanding of presentation anxiety in the Thai EFL context. The study was limited to students' self-reported perceptions and did not include observational data or longitudinal tracking of anxiety changes.

Methods

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to provide comprehensive examination of presentation anxiety levels, components, sources, and manifestations in Thai EFL contexts.

1. Participants

The target population comprised undergraduate students enrolled in English presentation courses at a public university in Thailand. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) second-year students majoring in Business English; (2) enrolled in the English for Presentation course during semester 2/2024; (3) native speakers of Thai; and (4) voluntary consent to participate. A convenience sampling approach was employed due to practical accessibility considerations. Students were recruited from three class sections taught by one of the researchers. All eligible students (N = 118) were invited to participate voluntarily, with no academic penalties for non-participation. To minimize potential researcher bias, several measures were implemented: participation was entirely voluntary with guaranteed anonymity, questionnaire responses were anonymized, the PRPSA was administered after the completion of all graded presentation tasks, and the study received prior ethical approval. The final sample of 105 participants (89.0% response rate) included 86 females (81.9%), 15 males (14.3%), and 4

unspecified (3.8%). Regarding previous experience, 54 students (51.4%) had prior high school English presentation experience, while 51 (48.6%) had none. A screening question in the demographic section of the questionnaire revealed that 103 participants (98.1%) reported feeling anxious about the current course, providing initial evidence of the widespread nature of presentation anxiety in this population.

2. Research Instruments

2.1 Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA)

The PRPSA (McCroskey, 1970) consists of 34 items on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument demonstrates high reliability (α = .94, test-retest = .84) and measures three components: (1) Anticipatory Anxiety—pre-presentation worry and apprehension; (2) Physiological Symptoms—bodily manifestations such as increased heart rate and trembling; and (3) Lack of Control During Performance—cognitive disruption and loss of composure. The Thai-translated version was validated through back-translation procedures, and reliability analysis with the current sample yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. Mean scores were interpreted using equal interval classification: 1.00–1.80 = Very Low, 1.81–2.60 = Low, 2.61–3.40 = Moderate, 3.41–4.20 = High, and 4.21–5.00 = Very High.

2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Individual interviews lasting approximately 20 minutes were conducted in Thai to gather in-depth information about anxiety experiences, sources, and manifestations. Fifteen participants were purposively selected to represent different anxiety levels based on PRPSA scores (5 each from low, moderate, and high anxiety groups according to McCroskey's three-level classification). A set of interview questions was sent to three experts in the field of English as a Foreign Language, who employed the Item-Objective Congruence Index to verify content validity (IOC). The IOC values for interview questions ranged from 0.67 to 1.00, with an overall IOC value of 0.88.

3. Data Collection Procedures

This study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (Approval Code: MCU RS.857/2567). All participants provided informed consent. Questionnaires were administered during weeks 11–12 of the semester following the final presentation task, ensuring sufficient presentation experience. Semi-structured interviews were conducted during weeks 13–15 in private settings to ensure confidentiality.

4. Data Analysis

For quantitative analysis, PRPSA total scores were categorized using Kurakan's (2021) five-level classification criteria. Descriptive statistics were calculated for overall anxiety levels and individual PRPSA components. For qualitative analysis, interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. Two researchers independently coded the interviews, with disagreements resolved through discussion. The convergent parallel design integrated quantitative and qualitative findings during interpretation to provide comprehensive understanding.

Results

1. English Presentation Anxiety Levels

Table 1 Distribution of Anxiety Levels Based on PRPSA Scores

Anxiety Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low anxiety	34–84	5	4.76
Moderately low anxiety	85–92	5	4.76
Moderate anxiety	93–110	17	16.19
Moderately high anxiety	111–119	16	15.24
High anxiety	120–170	62	59.05
Total		**105**	**100.00**

Table 1 presents the distribution of participants across five anxiety levels according to Kurakan's (2021) classification criteria. The majority of participants (59.05%, n = 62) demonstrated high anxiety levels (scores 120–170). When

combined with the moderately high anxiety group (15.24%, n = 16), a substantial 74.29% of students experienced moderately high to high levels of presentation anxiety. The moderate anxiety category accounted for 16.19% (n = 17), while lower categories comprised only 9.52% of the sample (moderately low: 4.76%, n = 5; low: 4.76%, n = 5). Overall, 90.48% of students experienced moderate to high anxiety, indicating that presentation anxiety represents a widespread challenge among Thai EFL undergraduate students. The mean PRPSA score of 123.14 (SD = 21.64) falls within the high anxiety range, further confirming the severity of this issue.

It is noteworthy that 98.1% of participants reported feeling anxious about the course in the screening question, which closely aligns with the PRPSA finding that 90.48% demonstrated moderate to high anxiety. The small discrepancy (7.62%) may reflect participants whose self-perceived nervousness did not reach the threshold captured by the standardized instrument, suggesting that the PRPSA provides a more nuanced measurement than simple self-assessment.

2. Anxiety Components Analysis

Table 2 PRPSA Components Analysis

Anxiety Component	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Anticipatory Anxiety	3.55	1.10	High
Physiological Symptoms	3.51	1.26	High
Lack of Control During	3.00	1.11	Moderate
Overall	**3.35**	**1.16**	**Moderate**

Anticipatory anxiety yielded the highest mean score (M = 3.55), interpreted as high, with the highest-rated items being “While preparing for the presentation, I feel tense and nervous” (M = 4.34) and “I get anxious when I think about the presentation coming up” (M = 4.26). Physiological symptoms also reached high levels (M = 3.51), with rapid heartbeat (M = 3.90) and hand trembling (57.1% of participants) as prominent manifestations. Lack of control during performance was moderate (M = 3.00), though 63.8% of participants reported difficulty maintaining mental clarity during delivery.

The hierarchical pattern across the three components, with anticipatory anxiety highest and lack of control lowest, suggests that anxiety was most intense during the pre-presentation phase and diminished somewhat during actual delivery. However, this pattern should be interpreted with caution, as qualitative data (presented in the following section) revealed that the relatively lower performance control scores may reflect coping mechanisms such as script-reading and rapid delivery rather than genuine composure.

3. Sources and Manifestations of Presentation Anxiety

Table 3 Primary Sources of Presentation Anxiety

Anxiety Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
English language ability	49	46.67
Limited presentation skills	20	19.05
Audience response	16	15.24
Teacher evaluation	8	7.62
Presentation content	5	4.76
Pronunciation concerns	4	3.81
Insufficient rehearsal time	3	2.86
Total	**105**	**100.00**

Perceived English language ability was the dominant anxiety source (46.67%, n = 49), followed by limited presentation skills (19.05%, n = 20), audience response concerns (15.24%, n = 16), and fear of teacher evaluation (7.62%, n = 8).

The quantitative ranking of anxiety sources was corroborated by interview data. Participants who identified English language ability as their primary concern frequently described a gap between their receptive knowledge and productive ability, particularly under the time pressure of live presentations. Those citing audience response concerns specifically mentioned fear of peer judgment, which connects to the cultural dimension of face-saving explored in the qualitative findings below.

Qualitative Insights: Anxiety Manifestations

Interview analysis revealed anxiety manifestations across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Cognitively, participants described significant disruption: *"My mind becomes completely blank when I stand in front of the class. I forget everything I prepared, even simple words I know well"* (Participant H7). Emotionally, responses ranged from mild nervousness to intense fear: *"It's not just nervousness—it's real fear. I'm afraid everyone will laugh at my English or think I'm stupid"* (Participant M8). Behaviorally, students reported visible symptoms and avoidance strategies: *"My hands shake so much I can't hold my notes properly"* (Participant H15), and *"I always try to present first to get it over with, or sometimes I pretend to be sick"* (Participant H9).

Cultural and educational factors emerged as important influences. Students frequently linked anxiety to face-saving concerns: *"In Thai culture, making mistakes in front of others is very embarrassing. When I speak English badly, I feel like I lose face"* (Participant H6). The disconnect between secondary school grammar-focused instruction and university presentation requirements was also noted: *"We never learned to present in English before university. Suddenly we have to do it and it's very scary"* (Participant M11). Students described anxiety as creating a negative learning cycle where presentation fears prevent engagement with course content, with several indicating that anxiety influenced their course selection and academic trajectories.

Discussion

Anxiety Levels and Prevalence

This mixed-methods study provides a comprehensive examination of English presentation anxiety among Thai EFL undergraduate students. The finding that 90.48% of participants experienced moderate to high presentation anxiety (M = 123.14) substantially exceeds the 55.55% moderate anxiety reported by Kurakan (2021) among Thai engineering students, suggesting that anxiety may be particularly

acute in language-focused courses where oral communication is explicitly assessed. This prevalence aligns with the upper ranges found in recent international research (Wu, 2024; Nuraeni et al., 2024) and confirms that presentation anxiety represents a pervasive challenge in Thai EFL contexts, consistent with Horwitz, et al.'s (1986) conceptualization of FLA as a distinct situational anxiety. The substantially higher anxiety levels in the present study compared to Kurakan's (2021) findings may be attributed to the explicit language assessment component inherent in English presentation courses, where students are evaluated not only on presentation skills but also on linguistic accuracy and fluency in which a dual demand that engineering students presenting in their native language do not face (Teimouri et al., 2019).

Component Profile Analysis

The PRPSA components analysis revealed a distinct hierarchy among the three anxiety dimensions. Anticipatory anxiety yielded the highest mean score (M = 3.55), followed closely by physiological symptoms (M = 3.51), while lack of control during performance was notably lower (M = 3.00). The dominance of anticipatory anxiety is particularly significant, as qualitative data revealed that students experience a cycle of rumination beginning days before presentations, where worry about English proficiency triggers broader concerns about academic competence and social acceptance. This extends Cedar and Jaiyote's (2024) research on fear of negative evaluation by demonstrating that such fears manifest primarily in pre-performance phases. This finding is also consistent with Kelsen's (2019) observation that personal disposition and self-perceived competence significantly influence speaking anxiety, suggesting that pre-presentation interventions targeting self-efficacy beliefs may be more effective than performance-focused strategies.

The relatively lower performance control scores might suggest that students maintained composure during delivery. However, qualitative data revealed that this apparent control often reflects cognitive shutdown rather than actual management. Students reported speaking rapidly to finish quickly or reading from notes without

engaging the audience, suggesting that quantitative measures alone may underestimate the true impact of anxiety on presentation performance. This discrepancy between quantitative scores and qualitative experiences is consistent with Teimouri et al.'s (2019) meta-analytic finding that anxiety's detrimental effects on achievement are often mediated by complex cognitive and affective processes that simple self-report measures may not fully capture.

Sources of Anxiety: Linguistic and Cultural Dimensions

The finding that 46.67% of students identified English language ability as their primary anxiety source aligns with previous research on the relationship between linguistic competence and communication confidence (Tian & Mahmud, 2018). Qualitative insights revealed that this anxiety stems not from objective proficiency levels but from perfectionist expectations rooted in Thai educational culture that traditionally emphasizes accuracy over communication. Thaksanan (2024) similarly found that Thai EFL students prioritize grammatical correctness over communicative effectiveness in presentation contexts, reinforcing a performance-oriented rather than learning-oriented approach to speaking tasks.

Furthermore, Thai cultural values—particularly face-saving and the concept of "kreng jai" (consideration for others)—intensify presentation anxiety beyond typical public speaking concerns (Kalra & Siribud, 2020). Research has shown that learners from cultures where face-saving behaviors are normative tend to experience more intense speaking anxiety (Woodrow, 2006). Students described physical symptoms as "visible signs of weakness" and worried about "wasting class time" with poor performance, demonstrating how cultural interpretation transforms moderate statistical anxiety into high subjective distress.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three theoretical contributions to the understanding of presentation anxiety in EFL contexts. First, the findings extend Horwitz, et al.'s (1986) FLCA framework by demonstrating that cultural factors—specifically face-saving and kreng jai—function as anxiety amplifiers that are context-specific rather than universal components of FLA. This suggests the need for culturally-mediated models of language anxiety that account for how cultural values transform the subjective experience of anxiety beyond what standardized instruments capture.

Second, the discrepancy between the moderate quantitative performance control scores (M = 3.00) and the qualitative evidence of cognitive shutdown during presentations reveals that apparent composure may mask significant anxiety-driven coping behaviors. This finding challenges the assumption that lower performance anxiety scores indicate effective anxiety management, and suggests that mixed-methods approaches are essential for accurate assessment of presentation anxiety.

Third, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrates that effective support for Thai EFL learners requires interventions addressing not only anxiety symptoms but also the cultural contexts shaping their manifestation. The educational gap between secondary school grammar instruction and university presentation requirements explains why even students with strong foundational English skills experience high presentation anxiety, possessing linguistic knowledge but lacking communicative confidence.

Conclusions

This convergent parallel mixed-methods study revealed that English presentation anxiety is widespread among Thai EFL undergraduate students, with 90.48% experiencing moderate to high levels. Anticipatory anxiety was the most prominent component, driven primarily by perceived English language ability rather than actual proficiency. Cultural factors, particularly face-saving and kreng jai, emerged as significant amplifiers that intensify the anxiety experience beyond

typical public speaking concerns. The mixed-methods design proved essential in uncovering the incongruence between quantitative measures and lived experiences, particularly regarding performance control, where apparent composure masked cognitive shutdown and avoidance behaviors.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Application

Based on the findings, several evidence-based pedagogical recommendations are proposed. First, given the dominance of anticipatory anxiety, interventions should prioritize pre-presentation phases through a graduated exposure model. That is, beginning with pair presentations, progressing to small group audiences, and advancing to whole-class delivery (Kelsen, 2019). Pre-presentation mindfulness and breathing exercises should be incorporated to help students manage physiological symptoms during the anticipatory phase.

Second, given that face-saving concerns significantly increase anxiety, Thai EFL instructors should create low-stakes practice environments where errors are normalized through structured peer-support activities and anonymous feedback systems that reduce the perceived social risk of public performance (Zarei et al., 2024). Video self-reflection activities, where students review their own presentations privately before receiving peer feedback, can help recalibrate the gap between perceived and actual performance quality.

Third, the finding that language ability perception—rather than actual proficiency—drives anxiety suggests that explicit metacognitive discussions about communicative competence versus accuracy may help recalibrate student expectations (Wu, 2024). Instructors should integrate scaffolded presentation tasks that gradually increase linguistic and cognitive demands while providing consistent positive reinforcement of communicative achievement.

Suggestions for further studies

This study's focus on second-year students in a single university limits generalizability across different academic levels and institutional contexts. Future research should examine anxiety patterns across academic years to understand how presentation experience influences anxiety development. Additionally, intervention studies testing culturally specific anxiety reduction strategies would provide valuable evidence for pedagogical practice.

Acknowledgement

This research was financially supported by Prince of Songkla University, Surat Thani Campus, 2025 Grant No. LAM6803049S. The researchers would like to thank all the students who participated in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this research.

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