REDUCING PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY IN UNDERGRADUATES: A CASE STUDY OF AN INTERVENTION WITH ACCOUNTANCY STUDENTS

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Abstract

Oral communication apprehension, particularly its subset public speaking anxiety, has been widely reported as a problem for Accountancy students and a concern for employers who often find graduates underprepared for roles that no longer fit the stereotype of the reticent accountant. This thesis provides a case study of an intervention in which year one accountancy undergraduates deliver three group presentations which aim to develop presentation skills and ease the anxiety felt by many towards presenting. The intervention is part of a core module which aims to help students develop a range of skills relevant to study and employability.

The main aim of the study is to develop a theoretical framework for the intervention underpinned by Illeris's (2009) three dimensional conception of learning. The study also aims to map the changes in public speaking anxiety exhibited by the students, identifies factors which influence student apprehension towards public speaking on entering university and assesses, with a particular focus on self-efficacy, what features of the intervention the most apprehensive students believe help ease apprehension towards presentations.

The study is a critical realist investigation, drawing on evidence from McCroskey's (1970) widely used PRCA-24 questionnaire as well as reflections and research conversations provided by the most apprehensive presenters.

Consistent with most previous studies, public speaking anxiety was found to be the mode of oral communication that created the greatest apprehension amongst students. The study also found that average apprehension for public speaking fell across all cohorts as well as for the highly apprehensive students.

The research revealed previous experiences of presenting to be a key factor in helping those who claimed that they had overcome apprehension towards presenting. Those indicating high apprehension were often most concerned about aspects of the audience, while confident students most frequently cited knowledge of the topic being presented and adequate preparation as the reasons for their assuredness.

During the intervention, highly apprehensive students revealed a variety of factors as contributing to reduced apprehension, many of which were sources of self-efficacy. The study demonstrates that Illeris's three dimensional model of learning should include self-efficacy as an element of the incentive dimension of learning.

The study has a number of implications for future research and practice, including the need for further studies into interventions which have a similar purpose, in order to gain a broader view of what can work in helping apprehensive students develop skills and confidence as presenters. For practitioners, the study supports the use of a multifaceted intervention as well as the implementation of a progression from simple low stakes to more complex high stakes presentations.

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List of Abbreviations

AIO:	Accountants in Organisations
ANOVA:	Analysis of Variance
AST:	Academic Skills Tutor
BERA:	British Education Research Association
CA:	Communication Apprehension
CI:	Confidence Interval
COM:	Cognitive-orientation modification
CSP:	Contributing Student Pedagogy
df:	Degrees of Freedom
HE:	Higher Education
M:	Mean
OCA:	Oral Communication Apprehension
PBL:	Problem-Based Learning
PRCA-24:	Personal Report of Communication Apprehension 24
PSA:	Public Speaking Anxiety
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SE:	Standard Error
SD:	Standard Deviation
Tukey's HSD	Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference

Preface

When I was about fifteen years of age, just prior to entering my final year of secondary education, the topic of who would be the school's head boy for the following year arose. The school was only small and so the prospects for any reasonably behaved and polite young man being chosen, as I thought I was, were quite high. However, I only had two things on my mind; the Head Boy's carol service reading and the Head Boy's prize giving address, the thoughts of which filled me with complete dread. I begged my mother to contact the school to explain that should there be any prospect of my becoming Head Boy then I would have to decline. We reached a compromise; she promised to make sure I would not have to carry out these duties if I became Head Boy. Fortunately, she never had to go through with this promise.

I cannot attribute the sharp sense of anxiety that I felt at the thought of speaking in front of others to one factor but reading aloud in class either contributed to this fear or was a clear indication that I had such a fear. I can still sense the anxiety that I felt when we were being randomly selected in turn to read aloud. I remember very little about the literature we studied, only being focussed on not making mistakes as I read Macbeth or The Merchant of Venice aloud. Before my turn I would follow the words praying that I would not be selected. When my turn was over there was a sharp sense of relief that it had been encountered relatively inconspicuously or a sense of embarrassment if I had not recognised, mispronounced or tripped over words.

One of my final days at the school was my 'O' Level English Oral Examination. This began with me having to read a passage to two fellow students who were also being examined and two examiners. I had to read my passage first. As I stood there and began to read I took deep breaths but only let small amounts of air out each time; thus my chest became tighter and my nerves more intense. I can remember standing in front of the others, rays from the Sun pouring through the window and while continuing to read the passage my leg began to shake involuntarily. I had absolutely no control over it

and to me it seemed to be jolting; jolting so violently that I thought surely the examiners must have noticed.

Moving on past almost five years of sixth form and degree studies and I was celebrating having been accepted to study to become a secondary school teacher. The only thing that I can remember that drew me into teaching was that I had coached handball both at school and polytechnic and a teacher, having watched me take a session of handball in the sixth from, had told me that teaching was something that I should consider for a career. I can never remember being fazed by the thought of becoming a teacher. It is a vocation for which I can only ever remember looking forward to the challenge. Even when things did not go well or when a session seemed difficult to plan I can never remember experiencing the type of anxiety that I had experienced as a sixteen-year-old when having to speak in front of others.

By the mid-1990s I had been enjoying teaching for ten years and I decided to study for a Master's Degree. There were twenty of us on the course and I was one of only two native speakers. The course leader approached me to ask if, being one of the only native speakers, I would be good enough to lead the first tutorial with a fellow student. I agreed and having received the topic we began to research and then plan the session. The topic was from a linguistics module and despite hours of preparation and practice I never felt fully confident that I really understood the topic and how best to organise the session. It was probably the lack of confidence that I had with my topic as well as the novel audience, it was the first time I had really invested time in presenting to adults, that for the second time in my life I experienced the uncontrollable jolting of my leg.

Twenty years later and I have been involved in supporting students with communication skills at university for over fifteen years. Part of this role involves working on a module with first year accountancy students. The module is the main driver of skills development on the course and since its inception ten years ago has evolved drawing on what the module leader and I believe is good practice and what in our experience seems to be successful. This has been informed by our work with the students, our prior learning and

ideas gleaned from developmental sessions. While these ideas have developed from pedagogy, we had never stopped to consider in any detail how the overall approach we developed might be theoretically underpinned and what aspects of our practice were most effective. Neither had we proactively sought further steps to enhance the approach; much of the innovation had been inspired by our students and what we learned when attending conferences and workshops.

Each year the students are a heterogeneous group, coming with widely differing experiences and attitudes. This observation particularly applies to communication skills, including speaking in front of audiences. The students need to develop presentation skills as they are an important part of the course; introduced as a reflection of the importance that the accounting profession places on such skills and the efficiencies they afford in mass assessment. However, there are a number of students starting the course every year who report the same kind of anxiety that I had experienced many years earlier. As a result, we have developed an approach which attempts to help students develop their presentation skills but also helps those fearing the prospect of presenting in front of others. Whether such an approach can be successful is a matter which is contentious. However, we have noticed successes over the years and these positive outcomes have encouraged us to persist and develop the approach.

Therefore, the initial motivation to conduct this professional doctorate comes from my personal experiences as both a learner and an educator and a belief that I might be able to influence classrooms beyond my own by providing evidence of how anxious presenters can be helped to become more comfortable with presenting or even learn to enjoy it.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale

The ability to present ideas orally is a valued competence required by a number of professions (Campbell, Mothersbaugh, Brammer, & Taylor, 2001). In higher education (HE) the use of oral presentations is now widespread in business schools (Hutcheson, 2009) but is widely accepted as an area in which graduates demonstrate insufficient development (van Ginkel, Gulikers, Biemans, & Mulder, 2015). A profession in which there is particular concern over levels of communication skills developed by graduates is accountancy. It is from this concern that the current study derives with a tension that exists between professional expectations now requiring a greater development of generic skills from graduates (Gammie, Cargill, & Hamilton, 2010) and an enduring stereotype of the accountant in a profession that has been transformed (Usoff, 2013). The image of the reticent accountant endures despite considerable changes experienced by the profession in the 1990s (Ameen, Chow, & Jackson, 2000). The image of accountants as "number-crunchers devoid of personality" (Ameen, Chow, & Jackson, 2000) is re-enforced by the stereotype portrayed via the Internet (Ameen, Jackson, & Malgwi, 2010) and in popular culture (Miley & Read, 2012). University entrants are often influenced by the stereotype of the accountant, overestimating the relative importance of numeracy in accounting (Helliar, Monk, & Stevenson, 2009, p.187; Lucas and Mladenovic, 2014, p.130). Since recruiters are seeking graduates who can communicate, the HE sector must help undergraduates appreciate the importance of communication skills and help their development so that recruiters wish to employ them.

However, despite the realisation that communication skills are important for accountancy graduates, evidence suggests that students of the discipline often exhibit higher than average levels of apprehension towards communication. This conclusion was reported by Stanga and Ladd (1990) and has subsequently been reported, specifically regarding oral

communication, in research by Simons, Higgins and Lowe (1995), Hassall, Joyce, Bramhall, Robinson and Arquero (2005) and Arquero, Hassall, Joyce and Donoso (2007).

This professional doctorate is a case study of a classroom intervention embedded in a first year undergraduate accountancy and finance module, Accountants in Organisations (AIO), which seeks to enable students to develop a variety of skills including communication skills. While the students have opportunities to develop both written and oral communication skills, the module has a particular focus on oral presentations with the students delivering three group presentations during the module. The focus of the study centres on the extent to which the intervention contributes to the development of skills and confidence in delivering oral presentations. The specific focus is on those students who report experiencing high levels of apprehension towards public speaking.

1.2 Aims of the Study

This study has four aims.

A1 to map changes in public speaking anxiety (PSA) exhibited by students during the six-month period of a multifaceted intervention aimed at reducing PSA and developing oral presentation skills;

A2 to identify factors which might influence levels of PSA amongst year one accountancy students beginning their studies at university;

A3 to ascertain which features of the intervention support the presentation skills development of those students exhibiting PSA;

A4 to contribute to the development of a theoretical framework for the reduction of PSA and development of oral presentation skills as part of the same intervention.

In mapping the changes in levels of PSA, the first aim assesses whether following the intervention general levels of apprehension felt by students have declined and is

concerned with the degree to which the levels of apprehension felt by students in the study are consistent with those reported in previous studies. The second aim focusses on the students before the intervention begins, seeking to determine what the influences are on the levels of apprehension they experience towards delivering oral presentations. The third aim specifically focusses on the students who report experiencing high apprehension towards public speaking. It seeks to investigate any evidence of self-efficacy in public speaking contributing towards levels of apprehension and if there are particular features of the intervention that contribute towards developing skills and improved confidence towards oral presentations. The final aim considers the extent to which the intervention can provide a pedagogic underpinning for the development of confidence and skill in the delivery of oral presentations. Therefore, the specific research questions of the study are as follows

Q1 How does PSA as measured on the public speaking sub-scale of the PRCA-24 questionnaire alter during a six-month programme of presentation activities? (A1)

Q2 To what extent are the results of the PRCA-24 questionnaire administered in this study consistent with its use in previous studies? (A1)

Q3 What factors appear to contribute to the degree of PSA experienced by accountancy students as they begin studying at University? (A2)

Q4 What features of the intervention do students identify as either contributing to the development of their presentation skills or any reduction in PSA? (A3)

Q5 What evidence is there that sources of self-efficacy contribute to apprehensive students' confidence in presenting? (A3)

Q6 To what extent can an approach based on presentation skills development through problem-based learning (PBL) and contributing student pedagogy (CSP) also help students with PSA? (A4)

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The next chapter discusses the nature of PSA, focussing on the causes and highlighting some of the patterns in such apprehension reported in the relevant literature. Chapter Three focuses on why OCA, and specifically PSA, is particularly relevant to the accountancy profession. Chapter Four presents an overview of the most commonly suggested interventions for helping students reduce their levels of apprehension towards delivering oral presentations. The underpinning theoretical framework of the intervention which is the focus of this case study is then presented in Chapter Five. It explains how the framework uses Illeris's (2009) three dimensional model of learning and particularly draws on Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory and Wenger's (2009) communities of practice. This, in turn, provides support for the pedagogical approaches of PBL and CSP which are central to the approach taken in the intervention. The chapter concludes with an overview of how the approach manifests itself in the classroom. Chapter Six begins by setting out the philosophical and methodological underpinning of the research conducted for the study. The study adopts a critical realist approach employing mixed methods data collection, mostly gathering data generated within the intervention in the form of questionnaires and student reflections. Following presentation of the research methods used and how they were implemented, the chapter considers some of the limitations of the study. The results and analysis of the study are presented in Chapters Seven and Eight. The outcomes of the research which used the PRCA-24 questionnaire conducted for the study are presented in Chapter Seven and are divided into two areas focussing on students from across the module and then on the 2015/16 cohort. Firstly, the quantitative data gathered from the PRCA-24 questionnaire administered with all five cohorts of students is analysed in order to ascertain levels of OCA for public speaking held by the research participants at the beginning of their studies at university and towards the end of the first year, as well as to enable comparison with previously published studies into OCA. The next part considers data gathered at the beginning of the year with the 2015/16 cohort and compares the

responses to the public speaking subset of the PRCA-24 questionnaire which measures PSA and the written responses of students when asked to detail their experiences of delivering oral presentations prior to beginning the course. In doing so it assesses how the students feel about presentations, what they see as the causes of apprehension, how those who have overcome apprehension feel this has been achieved and identifies any factors which explain why confident presenters feel the way they do. Chapter Eight then focusses on the reflections and comments of participants from the 2015/16 and 2016/17 cohorts and who indicated that they were experiencing high PSA before the intervention and the small number who became highly apprehensive following the intervention. By considering this data, themes are developed concerning what aspects of the intervention impact on the students' skills development and confidence in delivering oral presentations. In Chapter Nine the findings from the results are discussed in relation to the literature and framework, specifically addressing the aims and research questions. In particular it discusses the original contribution that the study makes to our knowledge of how apprehensive presenters can develop skills and confidence as part of the same intervention and shows how an enhanced version of Illeris's framework of learning underpins the intervention. Finally, Chapter Ten draws the study to a conclusion by highlighting the main findings of the study and emphasising the original contribution that the study makes to our knowledge in the area of helping students gain confidence in delivering presentations. It also reiterates some limitations of the study and finishes by suggesting useful areas for future research and implications for practice.

Chapter 2: An Etiology of Public Speaking Anxiety

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by providing an overview of PSA. It clarifies its meaning and then discusses the determinants of the concept. Next some prominent trends in PSA identified in the literature are briefly discussed.

2.2 Public Speaking Anxiety

A feeling of nervousness when having to speak in public "is inevitable" (Theobald, 2013, p.105). In fact, PSA is often considered to be the most common phobia (Buss, 1980; Dwyer & Davidson, 2012) with studies suggesting that three-quarters of people are fearful of public speaking (Gallas & Latta, 2014, p.11). Research by Brewer (2001) in America found that public speaking was rated second only to snakes as the greatest fear by both males and females (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Greatest fears of Males and Females in 2001

Fear	Men (%)	Women (%)
Mice	6	33
Snakes	38	62
Spiders and insects	15	38
Being closed in a small space	25	42
Heights	31	41
Thunder and lightning	6	16
Flying on an airplane	14	22
Public speaking in front of an audience	37	44
Dogs	7	14
The dark	2	8
Crowds	10	12
Needles and getting shots	20	21
Going to the doctor	11	8

Source: Brewer (2001)

The fear of speaking in public even extends to senior managers, with Huber (2005) reporting on a survey of British business executives that found more than half considered public speaking to be the most daunting aspect of their job. Research into the fear of speaking in front of audiences has been wide ranging and has carried a variety of labels, such as stage fright and audience anxiety (Ayres & Schliesman, 2002, p.38) as well as the term glossophobia (Hancock, Stone, Brundange, & Zeigler, 2010, p.302). Research which has focussed on student apprehension in giving oral presentations has often used the concept of communication apprehension (CA). While stage fright and CA have often been used interchangeably in the literature, the terms require clarification. The concept of stage fright was originally considered in the context of oral communication only (McCroskey, 1982b). However, stage fright should not be limited to oral communication, since it can apply to other situations in which individuals are faced with audiences; for example, it is common among musicians (Clarke, Dibben and Pitts, 2010). OCA, on the other hand, is not restricted to one context but covers a range of contexts, which include one-to-one conversations, conversations in groups, meetings and public speaking (Bodie, 2010). OCA for public speaking and PSA are the terms often used to refer to the public speaking context of OCA (Bodie, 2010) which occurs when an individual is faced with the need to deliver a presentation to an audience. Both terms are used in this study to refer to the fear experienced when faced with delivering an oral presentation while OCA refers to the general fear of communicating orally regardless of context.

McCroskey (1982b, p.137) explained that the term CA was first deployed when he used it in 1970 describing it as “a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication” (McCroskey, 1970, p.270). McCroskey later defined the concept as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated [oral] communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p.78). MacIntyre, Thivierge and MacDonald (1997, p.158) then used McCroskey’s definition to explain that PSA can be

defined as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication in front of a group of persons."

2.3 Causes of Public Speaking Anxiety

Research into the causes of OCA is important since while they remain uncertain the design of effective interventions is difficult (Hassall, Arquero, Joyce and Gonzalez, 2013a; Taylor, 2014, p.1187). However, despite considerable research, disagreement remains regarding the causes of the fear felt towards communication (Hassall et al. 2013a, p.173). While McCroskey initially established the concept of OCA, the nature of the phenomenon was questioned. Delgado-Monge and Carrasquillo (1988, p.12) asserted that it was "far more complex than" McCroskey's initial conceptualisation and Taugher (1981, p.6) concluded that its causes were "not conclusively known". Progress in establishing any etiology for OCA was slow with Beatty, McCroskey and Heisel (1998, p.197) noting that despite research stretching back almost thirty years, a "coherent explanation" was lacking as to why some individuals avoid communicating or become anxious at the prospect. Despite being "the most widely researched concept in the field of communication studies" (Wrench, Brogan, McCroskey, & Jowi, 2008, p.404), much in the area remains unclear (Byrne, Flood, & Shanahan, 2012, p.566). This brief discussion has considered the broad concept of OCA of which PSA is a subset. It therefore follows that similar difficulties to those experienced in attempting to establish an etiology of OCA may be encountered when attempting to establish an etiology of PSA. Indeed, Sawyer (2016, p.398) referring specifically to PSA claims that it "continues to be an evolving construct". The difficulty that researchers have had in conceptualising OCA and PSA is not surprising since a wide range of reasons exist which attempt to explain such trepidation (Bippus & Daly, 1999, p.63).

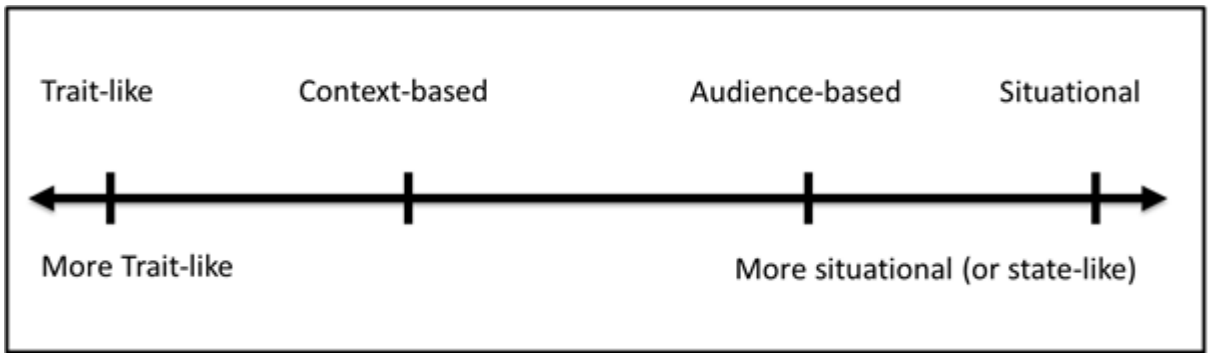
Discussion of the nature of both OCA and its subset PSA focuses on the degree to which the concepts can be regarded as traits of the individual or responses to particular

situations, with the view of CA as a trait tending to be the most prevalent according to Hanley White et al. (2015, p.24). McCroskey (1997, p.83) explains that while no distinction was originally made between the nature of CA as being a response to a particular situation or an individual trait, "the implication is clear that the construct was viewed from a trait orientation".

The discussion of trait anxiety tends to centre on the degree to which the concept can be regarded as genetic or learned. Therefore, one explanation that has been debated in the literature is that trait-like CA may be partially explained by heredity (McCroskey, 1984; Gardner, Milne, Stringer, & Whiting, 2005). McCroskey (1984) suggested that since research by social biologists into twins has indicated that heredity is a determinant of sociability then it follows that it may be a factor contributing to CA. Spielberger is credited with having originally proposed the notion that anxiety could be a trait of the individual (Lee, 2014, p.70). Spielberger (1966, p.15) proposed that anxiety research should focus on the existence of a "personality trait that remains relatively stable over time". Building on the notion of trait-like anxiety, Beatty, McCroskey and Heisel (1998) proposed the communibiological paradigm in which they suggested that as much as eighty percent of trait-like CA may be accounted for by genetic causes. Until Beatty, McCroskey and Heisel (1998) proposed the communibiological paradigm, trait–like CA had been mostly viewed as "a product of social learning" (Beatty et al., 2011, p.443). This discussion extends to the PSA element of OCA which Bodie (2010, p.72) reports as "validly conceptualized as a trait". Despite Bodie's assertion, most evidence suggests that OCA caused as a result of the oral communication taking place in a public speaking context is greater than OCA resulting from other contexts such as one-to-one conversation, group discussions and formal meetings. Shanahan (2011, p.34) analysed OCA research from fifteen studies conducted with business students from the US, Australia, Ireland, Spain, Canada and the UK and found that in thirteen of the fifteen cases the apprehension for the public speaking context was reported as higher than the other oral communication contexts. These findings are not limited to business students

with similar findings for research conducted with, for example, American engineering students (Frantz, Marlow, and Wathen, 2005), school principals (Webb, Hogg, Borst, & Orendorff, 2012), school teachers (Roby, 2009), and Japanese psychology students (Pribyl, Keaten, Sakamoto, & Koshikawa, 1998). This evidence suggests that while trait-like anxiety may still be viewed as the main contributor to PSA, anxiety caused in this context has more situational components than anxiety caused in the other contexts. Figure 2.1 shows the OCA Continuum (Richmond and McCroskey, 1998, p.43 cited by Shanahan, 2011, p.14) which sees apprehension as a continuum of causes which are at one extreme trait-like and at the other extreme state-like, determined entirely by the specific situation. The context of public speaking has a variety of potential audience-based and situational variables (Zaremba, 2012).

Figure 2.1 Oral Communication Apprehension Continuum



Source: Richmond and McCroskey (1998, p.43) cited by Shanahan, (2011, p.14)

Finn (2007, p.114) explains that "there are individual differences when it comes to state anxiety". Illustrating this point, Finn (2007) found that while the majority of students reported that apprehension increased along with the size of the audience, the reverse was the case for some students. "Similarly, some students reported less anxiety when they were able to stand behind a podium to present, but others reported more anxiety due to the podium." (Finn, 2007, p.115). In an example provided by Hamilton and Creel (2016, p.264) "a gifted teaching colleague" was not nervous when teaching students or

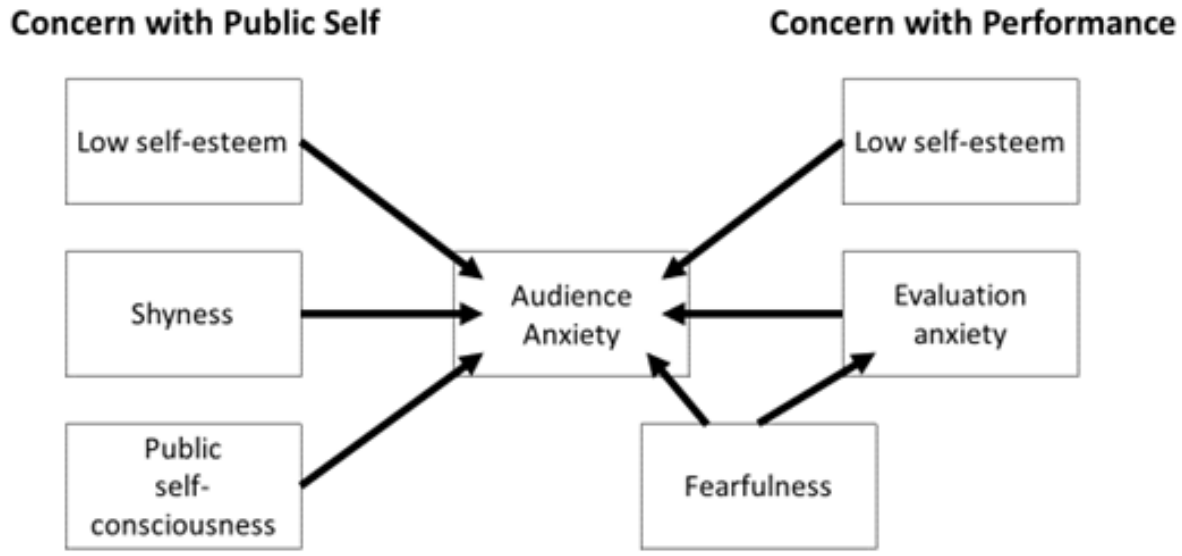
speaking in public about education to the government but found delivering talks to colleagues to be nerve racking. These examples illustrate how complex the situational components of PSA might be, yet researchers have attempted to identify the sources of PSA and categorise them. Pribyl, Keaten and Sakamoto (2001, p.150) provide a summary of seven causes synthesised from Beatty (1988) and Buss (1980). Two of the causes outlined by Pribyl et al. (2001, p.150) are 'novelty', which exists due to the lack of experience that a presenter has with public speaking, and 'conspicuousness', which concerns how exposed the presenter feels when faced with an audience. This conspicuousness has been referred to as the 'illusion of transparency' in studies by Savitsky and Gilovich (2003) and MacInnis, Mackinnon and MacIntyre (2010). Savitsky and Gilovich (2003) found that "participants who gave extemporaneous speeches overestimated the extent to which their nervousness was apparent to others" (p.623). They add that presenter concern over the "prospect that their nervousness is apparent to their audience" then leads to even higher apprehension (Savitsky & Gilovich, 2003, p.623). Pribyl et al.'s (2001) remaining five factors are concerned with characteristics of the audience. They are 'unfamiliarity' which refers to the audience and how familiar the presenter is with the members; 'formality' which concerns the strictness of the structure in which presentation takes place; 'subordinate status' which concerns the seniority of the audience and the threat carried from evaluation; 'degree of attention from others' which concerns the level of attentiveness of the audience; and 'dissimilarity' which concerns the level of difference the presenter perceives between themselves and the audience.

Finn (2007, p.85) found a variety of additional factors which students reported as sources of anxiety during presentations. The amount of preparation is a factor which other researchers, for example Byrne et al. (2012), have also identified as a determinant of PSA. Morreale (2010) has suggested that while preparation will not necessarily ensure a well delivered presentation, a lack of preparation is likely to heighten anxiety considerably. In addition, research by Behnke and Sawyer (1999) found that the level of

procrastination in the preparation of oral presentations correlated positively to the level of apprehension students experienced and negatively with self-perceptions of competence in public speaking. Other factors which Finn (2007) reported as contributing to PSA were presenter concerns over their physical appearance, thoughts relating to making errors, the characteristics of the room in which the presentation was to be delivered, the performance of previous speakers, confidence in the use of visual aids, knowledge of the topic and timing (Finn, 2007, p.85).

Despite the range of factors which seem to contribute to PSA, McCroskey (1997, p.93) questions whether many of the components labelled state-like are in fact really "the product of trait-like predispositions to perceive situations differently". Buss (2010) suggests that some of these may be general "dispositional causes". Figure 2.2 illustrates Buss's argument by suggesting that personality traits such as low "self-esteem, shyness and public-self-consciousness are causes of audience anxiety" (Buss, 1980, p.179). Furthermore, anxiety derived from evaluation which contributes to audience anxiety is also shown to derive from low self-esteem and fearfulness (Buss, 1980, p.180).

Figure 2.2 Dispositional Causes of Audience Anxiety



Source: Buss (1980, p.180)

A cause of PSA, that concerns the context of speaking to an audience specifically, is how the individual perceives presenting. McCarthy and Hatcher, (2002, p.3) discuss this as attitude to speaking to an audience. They discuss research by Motley and Molloy (1994) who suggest that presenters have a 'cognitive orientation' which is on a continuum from 'performance orientation' where the speaker is entirely concerned with the "aesthetic experience for listeners" and at the other end "'communication orientation' where the speaker is entirely concerned with the message they are trying to convey (McCarthy & Hatcher, 2002, p.3). The performance-oriented speaker assumes that the skills of presenting are more "formal", "polished" and "practiced" than in other communication contexts (McCarthy & Hatcher, 2002, p.3). In contrast, the communication-oriented speaker assumes the audience is focused intently on the message of the presentation and that the typical everyday imperfections of communication will be tolerated. Motley (1997, p.43) claims that most anxious speakers have a performance orientation and that by replacing this with a communication orientation the level of anxiety felt towards public speaking is reduced considerably. One explanation for widespread performance orientation of those speaking in public may be conditioning which takes place in many school classrooms though the need to recite or read aloud (Motley, 1997, p.46). Motley (1997, p.47) explains that these activities encourage the speaker to view speaking in public as a performance rather than an act of communication.

> It is easy to see how these early speech experiences promote performance orientation rather than a communication orientation. First, as speakers in these classroom recitations, we are not communicating our own ideas. Second, the words being recited are usually in an outdated language style that is artificial for speakers and audience alike. Third, the speech material usually is already known by the audience, so we are saying nothing new. And fourth, even if there is new information in these recitations, it usually is not of any particular interest to the young speaker or to the audience (Motley, 1997, p.47).

Motley's (1997) observations resonate strongly with my personal experiences as a teenager. If, over long periods of time, students learn that what is valued by an audience is the quality of the speech and that there is no new information communicated, then not only will they adopt a performance orientation for future public speaking but they are also likely to perceive public speaking as requiring a script or see it as a form of recital. Such a view of presenting in front of audiences is likely to be so strong that it may become part of the trait-like PSA of those individuals.

The preceding discussion illustrates that the causes of PSA are complex and that while some might be identified which seem to derive from the context of public speaking, the possibility remains that they are derived from individual trait-like hereditary or learned factors. Therefore, while there has been much research into the causes of CA, a clear explanation of why it occurs has not been established (Hall, 2002, p.48). It is evident though, that one reason for this lack of clarity in the context of PSA lies with the individual differences mentioned by Finn (2007) which produce a range of often contradictory responses to any given factor.

2.4 Trends Identified in Public Speaking Anxiety

While researchers have made slow progress towards a clear etiology of PSA, trends in its incidence have been suggested by many studies. Links have been made by researchers between OCA and variables, including socioeconomic background (Lang, Rowland-Morin, & Coe, 1998), language (Elliott and Chong, 2005) and academic self-confidence (Hassall et al., 2013a). However, more prominent links which have been suggested by a range of researchers include gender and two that are important in the current study which are vocational choice and individual levels of self-efficacy. These three dimensions are now briefly discussed.

2.4.1 Gender

A finding often reported in PSA research is that females are often found to be more apprehensive of public speaking than their male counterparts. Research conducted with American students (Frantz, Marlow, & Wathen, 2005; Hunter, Westwick, & Haleta, 2014; McCroskey, Simpson, & Richmond, 1982), medical students in Pakistan (Khan, Ismail, Shafique, Ghous, & Ali, 2015) and business students in Spain, the UK (Arquero et al., 2007) and Ireland (Byrne, Flood, & Shanahan, 2009) all found females to be more apprehensive of speaking in public than males. However, findings are not consistent and in the cases of Tse (2012) and Gaibani and Elmenfi (2014) no significant differences were reported in male and female anxiety towards public speaking which is consistent with the review of fear and anxiety conducted by McLean and Anderson (2009, p.497) who state that "few gender differences have been found for public speaking". Furthermore, while gender differences might be found with regard to PSA and are important to investigate, explanations other than biological sex are likely to explain why females report feeling more apprehensive than males in public speaking contexts; "findings linking anxiety responses to biological sex are very difficult to explain biologically" (McCroskey, Simpson, & Richmond, 1982, p.129). Khan et al. (2015, p.113) concede that their findings may be due to the dominant role of males in Pakistan. Another possible explanation that cannot be discounted, is that females may tend to report apprehension more readily than their male peers (Katkin & Silver-Hoffman, 1976, p.609). McCroskey, Simpson and Richmond (1982), finding females to be more apprehensive than males with regard public speaking, expressed concern that despite the differences not being large, they "may represent a meaningful barrier to the economic and social advancement of women in the society" (p.133). Investigation of gender differences is not an aim of this study. However, a comparison of gender is presented in Section 7.2.2 where the external reliability of the study is considered.

2.4.2 Vocational choice and discipline of study

Vocational choice and the discipline of study has been the subject of a number of studies in the area of OCA. Daly and McCroskey (1975) first suggested that there might be a connection between the perceptions of communication requirements of an occupation and the desirability of the occupation. Their study confirmed that there were "clear preferences on the part of high apprehensives for occupations having low communication requirements and low apprehensives for jobs with high communication requirements" (Daly & McCroskey, 1975, p.312). Their analysis divided occupations into categories of those seen as involving low levels of communication and those seen as involving high levels of communication. The research resulted in the profession of accountant being included amongst the occupations seen as involving low levels of communication. It seems a logical conclusion that students who are apprehensive about oral communication might take this into account and reject careers which would require high levels of oral communication. However, if the widely held perception of the profession is out of line with the demands of the job then this has implications for the profession in terms of the attributes of individuals attracted to it. The discipline which is the focus of the current study, accounting, is a case in point as will be explained in the next chapter.

2.4.3 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was first identified as a psychological construct by Bandura in 1977 (Schunk & Pajares, 2009) and is defined by Bandura (1997, p.3) as "the beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments". OCA was first identified as being linked to self-efficacy by Hopf and Colby (1992). Since, Hopf and Colby (1992) first acknowledged the link in their findings, a number of studies, such as Dwyer and Fus (2002), Orejudo, Fernández-Turrado, Briz, (2012), Hassall, Arquero, Joyce and Gonzalez (2013b) and Verano-Tacoronte and Bolívar-Cruz (2015) have drawn similar conclusions from their research but also

emphasised the link between self-efficacy and PSA; a "strong relationship between CA and self-efficacy is driven by the apprehension for 'presentation'" (Hassall et al., 2013b, p.166). The nature of self-efficacy and its link to PSA is discussed in Chapter Three and considered in depth in Chapter Four.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how complex the causes of PSA might be and that, as Sawyer (2016) points out, the concept is still evolving. Furthermore, the discussion has established that the causes of PSA can vary from individual to individual; meaning that seeking a solution which suits all apprehensive presenters is not possible.

Having established current thinking concerning the causes and nature of PSA, its apparent relationship to the discipline being studied and to self-efficacy towards public speaking, the next chapter considers the reasons why the discipline of this study, Accountancy, appears to have a higher incidence of PSA amongst its students when compared to many other disciplines.

Chapter 3: Accountancy and Public Speaking Anxiety

3.1 Background to the Issue

While the role of the accountant has always embodied the function of communication, this has only in recent years been highlighted as an area of concern. In the last twenty years the role has changed considerably (Bunney, Sharplin, & Howitt, 2014) with globalisation and technological advances, identified by Albrecht and Sack (2000) as major influences, signalling "the emergence of a broader role for accountants, necessitating competence in generic skills as well as the technical skills traditionally expected in the profession" (Bunney et al., 2014, p.260). However, it seems that accountancy education has been slow to keep pace, with a disconnect between the education generally provided and its professional demands, noted as long ago as the 1980s (Lawson, et al., 2014, p.297). In spite of this, accountancy curricula have been criticised for continuing to focus on subject content despite the need for those entering the profession to develop "multi-disciplinary skills" (Fouché, 2013, p.137). Therefore, there is a tension that exists between the expectations of the accountancy profession, which now requires a greater development of generic skills from graduates (Gammie et al., 2010), and an enduring stereotype of the accountant in a profession that has undergone a dramatic transformation (Usoff, 2013, p.61). It is with this perspective in mind that the current study derives.

3.2 The Stereotype

Sokoloff and Phillips (1976, p.342) reported a research participant as saying, "I picked my career as accountant because I won't have to talk to many people." This image of the reticent professional seems to have endured despite the considerable changes experienced by the accountancy profession (Ameen et al., 2000, p.337). The stereotype

of the accountant has not only endured but it is also a perspective repeated around the world. Research in Australia by Jackling (2002, p.76) found that accountancy courses helped perpetuate the negative stereotype of the accountant with the majority of students in her study viewing the work as boring or requiring number-manipulation. Wessels and Steenkamp (2009, p.129) in a South African context found that economics and management students, many of whom enrolled on accountancy programmes, saw the profession as consisting of "structured, precise and solitary individuals". Research by Byrne and Willis (2005) with Irish secondary school students found that many students considered the profession "to be boring, definite, precise and compliance driven." Similarly, in an American context, Hunt, Falgiani and Intrieri (2004) found students not studying the discipline as perceiving its professionals as "inflexible, unexciting, and detail oriented".

These examples are from predominantly advanced western economies and Albu, Albu, Gîrbină and Sandu (2011) note that more needs to be known about the perception of accountants in other cultural contexts. Such evidence is sparse; however, research in Macau conducted by Hung (2014) draws similar conclusions to those already mentioned, with university students from Macau and China seeing accountants as precise and boring. A more positive view of the profession held by those who have experience of studying accountancy is supported by research in Malaysia conducted by Hashim, Embong, and Shaari (2012) who found secondary students studying accountancy and commerce to have a positive image of the profession. Pitcher (2017) further supports the notion that a greater knowledge of the profession can shift perceptions. Pitcher (2017) found accountancy professionals surveyed had originally perceived the profession as uninteresting, highly concerned with numeracy and boring but as practitioners these were replaced by "teamwork, organisation, security and stability" (Pitcher, 2017, p.iii).

The image held by society of accountants as "number-crunchers devoid of personality" (Ameen et al., 2000, p.337 citing Sundem, 1994) is re-enforced in the media and popular culture by the stereotype portrayed via the Internet (Ameen et al., 2010, p.33-

34) and through enduring jokes (Miley & Read, 2012). Indeed, a search for images of 'Accountant' via the search engine Google (see Appendix 1) returned twenty-two pictures before a calculator was absent. Of these twenty-two images most depict a solitary individual sat at a desk pouring over calculations. Furthermore, amongst the suggestions for refining searches for images of 'Accountant' are 'stereotype' and 'boring'. Further evidence of this stereotype is provided in Appendix 2, in which an Internet forum discussion on the website Able2Know (2012) entitled 'Stereotypical image of an accountant' is replicated. The discussion begins with a quote from Dooley (2010) which questions the stereotype of the accountant and asks what the word visor means since it is included in Dooley's description of the stereotype. Within minutes a response is posted which includes a picture of a visor wearing accountant and is followed an hour later by a joke supporting the reticence of accountants portrayed by the stereotype. However, Parker (2001, p.447) has stated that "[the] profile of the accountant as beancounter is becoming increasingly distanced from the work in which accountants are becoming engaged". As a result of this, there is a concern within the profession which centres around the effect that this enduring stereotype has on the profession's development (Baldvinsdottir, Burns, Nørreklit, & Scapens, 2009, p.858) with concern that the "beancounter stereotype" causes bias in recruitment, may become "self-fulfilling" and may result in professional "dumbing down" (Friedman & Lyne, 2001, p.424).

3.3 The Suitability of Graduates for the Accountancy Profession

Recruiters themselves are also concerned about the suitability of graduates for the accountancy profession; there has long been unease that the education system is not equipping graduate accountants with the skills required by the profession (Hassall, Arquero, Joyce, & Gonzalez, 2013a, p.166). As part of this concern the focus on the need for accountancy graduates to "possess good communication skills is not new" (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.166) with surveys of accounting professionals in the 1990s concluding the main competency required in the industry as being communication

(Arquero et al. 2007). The accountant of today needs "to be a business advisor and an important member of the management team" and contribute to "strategy formulation and decision making … consequently there is a need for accountants to possess good communication skills" (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.166). However, frustration with the general level of graduate development in communication skills continues to be an issue with Gray (2010, p.54) reporting that "dissatisfaction … has been expressed internationally, by both academics and practitioners", Hassall et al. (2013a, p.166) emphasising that "concerns are still prevalent today" despite the issue having been highlighted for many years and van Ginkel et al. (2015), who focus specifically on oral presentations, concluding that, despite the importance attached to the ability to deliver oral presentations, graduates tend not to have developed sufficiently in the area. Indeed, the need for practitioners to be competent presenters has even been emphasised in the professional accounting literature with Bartram (2014) outlining the need for accounting professionals to develop these skills.

> Management accountants can no longer tuck themselves away in the back office, knowing that they will never be asked to step into the limelight. The ability to make a good presentation is now a key skill in the financial manager's armoury (Bartram, 2014, p.42).

The stereotype of the accountant also seems to have an influence on the perceptions that university entrants have of the skills that are required in accountancy with students often having "inappropriate or unrealistic" perceptions (Lucas and Mladenovic, 2014, p.130). This includes often overestimating the relative importance of numeracy (Helliar, Monk & Stevenson, 2009, p.187; Lucas & Mladenovic, 2014, p.130) and underestimating the role of communication (Lin, Krishnan, & Grace 2013; Lucas & Mladenovic, 2014, p.131). While recruiters demand graduates who can communicate, the HE sector is in the middle, in a position of helping undergraduate accountants appreciate the importance of communication skills and helping them develop to the extent that graduate recruiters wish to employ them. Despite changes to degree courses that have

incorporated a focus on communication, evidence presented from recent studies by Lin et al. (2013) and Roberts (2017) have found that students continued to underestimate the importance of communication skills in the role of the professional accountant.

In addition to the need for universities to help accountancy students appreciate the importance of good communication and help them develop these skills there is an added issue that is widely reported concerning the higher levels of apprehension accounting students tend to exhibit when having to communicate in comparison with their peers studying other disciplines (Simons and Riley, 2014, p.3). A variety of studies have investigated CA and found OCA to be high amongst business and accounting students when compared to students studying other subjects (Shanahan, 2011).

Both Shanahan (2011) and Roberts (2017) identify Stanga and Ladd (1990) as the first to investigate OCA amongst accounting students. Stanga and Ladd (1990) investigated levels of OCA of students studying different business subjects at an American university. They found that accounting students studying introductory accounting had levels of OCA and PSA slightly higher than the national average, and higher on average than those studying other business subjects. A pattern of accounting students demonstrating higher OCA and PSA than their peers is commonplace with similar findings from research of sophomores in the USA (Simons et al., 1995), British undergraduate accounting and engineering students (Hassall et al., 2005) and British and Spanish undergraduates (Arquero et al., 2007). However, the results of other studies have not followed this trend. A study in New Zealand which compared first year accountancy students with first year business students found the business students to have slightly higher OCA compared with the accounting students but with the reverse being true for PSA (Gardner et al., 2005). In a study conducted with Chinese students in Malaysia no significant difference was found between the OCA reported by accounting and business students (Foo & Ong, 2013). The result showed that the participants had "exceptionally higher levels of CA" when compared with previous studies conducted in developed counties (Foo & Ong, 2013, p.427). This may be "influenced by the Oriental culture … [which] …

indirectly produces more apprehensive students" (Foo & Ong, 2013, p.427). These and similar studies reveal that even when OCA is not greater for accounting students when compared with their peers, the possibility remains that students exhibit high levels of PSA.

How best the issue of OCA and PSA can be addressed is contentious since concern remains as to whether programmes which include oral presentations may in fact lead to greater OCA amongst those experiencing it (Ameen et al., 2010). Where interventions are included they are often aimed at communication development and overlook the reduction of OCA (Hassall, Arquero, Joyce, & Gonzalez, 2013a, p.174). Indeed, "[t]he balance of evidence shows that current accounting courses have little effect on students' levels of CA and therefore their communication skills development" (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.174). Hassall et al. (2013b, p.165) go as far as to question whether, given the nature of accounting education in HE, it is possible to design an intervention which can reduce OCA. However, where success is evident then research should be conducted "in order to establish good practice" (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.174). Despite the reservations expressed concerning the effectiveness of interventions, there is support for the adoption of classroom approaches which attempt to integrate skills development in the classroom with Simons and Riley (2014, p.3) asserting that "CA must be addressed in the accounting curriculum concurrently with initiatives to improve students' communication skills". On the other hand, while Ameen et al. (2010, p.43) agree that it is important for courses to establish early on which students may have CA, they see the help required occurring outside the classroom via communication skills specialists.

The case examined in this study draws on many of the ideas presented in the literature. It uses communication skills specialists but these professionals work alongside the accounting professionals. The intervention is designed to address both oral communication development and the reduction of OCA particularly in the context of public speaking.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated why the issue of OCA is particularly relevant to the Accountancy profession and to those responsible for helping Accountancy students develop the skills required by the profession. PSA is the subset of OCA which most often causes the greatest anxiety when compared with other forms of OCA. It is clear that those responsible for designing Accounting curricula need to ensure that issues such as how skills are incorporated and how they are delivered are accounted for in the course design. Furthermore, specifically regarding communication, attention needs to be given to how those students experiencing high levels of CA can be catered for in interventions designed to develop communication skills. The case examined in this thesis responds to the call by Hassall et al. (2013a) to report on instances where success is evident. In doing so it provides a qualitative insight into the thoughts and feelings of students experiencing PSA over the course of the intervention in the AIO module; an approach which does not appear to have been taken with accountancy students previously. Indeed, Byrne et al. (2012, p.567), the first to conduct a qualitative study into OCA when they interviewed first year undergraduates during their second semester, concluded that there was "an absence of qualitative research of the topic with students in all disciplines".

The next chapter discusses what solutions are available when considering how students can be helped to reduce the apprehension they might feel towards public speaking.

Chapter 4: Addressing Public Speaking Anxiety

4.1 Introduction

Even where CA has been identified as an individual trait, it has been suggested that interventions can be used which may help reduce CA levels (Simons & Riley, 2014, p.13). Given the variety of possible causes of OCA it is not surprising that that there are numerous suggestions offered with regard to how it might be reduced. While the interventions aimed at helping students overcome PSA are numerous and generally grounded in research, "not every technique for managing or reducing PSA will work for everyone" (Cuny, 2015, p.38). This chapter provides a discussion of possible interventions aimed at helping students reduce their levels of PSA. It shows that a multifaceted approach, such as the one which is the focus of this study, is more likely to meet with success than an approach based on just one technique.

4.2 Helping Students Reduce Public Speaking Anxiety

Three techniques are commonly suggested to help reduce PSA (Docan-Morgan & Schmidt, 2012, p.16). These techniques are conditioned anxiety reduction interventions or systematic desensitization, negative thought interventions or cognitive modification, and skills training (Pribyl et al., 2001; Bodie, 2010). The interventions are often categorised as behavioural and pedagogic (Gardner, et al., 2005; Shanahan, 2013; Hassall et al., 2013a, p.172). Behavioural interventions tend to be provided as an addition to presentation activities, focussing on the psychology of the individual towards presentations "and include systematic desensitisation, cognitive restructuring, assertiveness training, stress release exercises and visualisation techniques" (Gardner, et al., 2005, p.318). However, a major difficulty when considering many of the behavioural interventions is that they are "time consuming and resource intensive and …

therefore inappropriate for 'mass' education" (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.172). Pedagogical interventions tend to focus directly on the public speaking activity (Gardner, et al., 2005, p.318) with the main examples being "skills training and actual public speaking" (Shanahan, 2013, p.6). This type of approach aims to incorporate suitable interventions by "involving students in communication development exercises" (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.172). However, pedagogical interventions need to be designed carefully in order to ensure students with high OCA engage in them and that the approach adopted does not have the result of heightening the apprehension felt by anxious students rather than reducing it (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.173). Some of the most common interventions which have been the subject of previous research are now discussed.

4.2.1 Systematic Desensitization

"Systematic desensitization is a behavioral intervention that has been used in the classroom to reduce OCA" (Simons et al., 1995, p.171) and is described by Docan-Morgan and Schmidt (2012, p.17) as a "three-step process of relaxation and deep breathing, visualization, and speaking exercises". It was widely researched when interventions aimed at reducing OCA were first being sought (Roberts, 2017) and was identified by McCroskey (1972, p.264) as providing "significant benefits to those involved". However, Roberts' (2017) assessment of such interventions which require "gradual and systematic exposure" to fear (Roberts, 2017, p.71) concludes that such interventions are not practical for use with large cohorts in a HE setting.

4.2.2 Practice and Exposure Therapy

Having students practise presentations is an example of a pedagogical intervention that has been shown to be an effective strategy for helping students to reduce levels of anxiety. Research by Ayres, Schliesman and Sonandre (1998) indicated that "practicing

a speech in class is associated with reduced apprehension and a higher degree of willingness to deliver speeches" (Ayres et al., 1998, p.176). A study by Finn (2007) using exposure therapy drew a similar conclusion, claiming that a "method which should help students combat their fear of speaking in front of an audience is to have them present in front of an audience" (Finn, 2007, p.113). This is a theme which is emphasised by many writers on the topic of how to help students build confidence in presenting with Allen, Burrell and Bourhis (2008, p.349) stressing that, "Practice provides focus and increases confidence in the ability to communicate the content" and in the context of accounting education Smythe and Nikolai (2002, p.177) highlighting the importance of "continued exposure and practice" when considering how OCA can be reduced.

4.2.3 Learning Communities

Creating groups in which to prepare and deliver oral presentations has been suggested as a method of helping reduce OCA which is also categorised as a pedagogical strategy. Edwards and Walker (2007) conducted research into the degree to which OCA was reduced for students who studied as part of such learning communities when compared with students studying the same module as a standalone addition to their studies. They found that OCA was reduced to a significantly greater degree for those who were part of the learning community and suggest that "[s]tudents are more comfortable speaking in a class, such as public speaking, when they are in constant contact with their peers and instructors" (Edwards & Walker, 2007, p.68). Despite this, they caution that the outcome may not be due to the learning environment but may be as a result of the instructor treating groups differently. "The concept of learning communities provides a fruitful avenue of teaching and research to help our students cope with communication apprehension" and, whatever the cause for the difference, more research should be conducted into the effect that learning communities have on the level of OCA (Edwards & Walker, 2007, p.69). Also in research of classroom community and PSA, Swenson (2011)

found a negative correlation between levels of classroom community reported by participants and their levels of PSA.

4.2.4 Cognitive Modification

Two popular interventions which are categorised under cognitive modification are performance visualisation and cognitive-orientation modification therapy (Wongprasert & Ayres, 2000). Performance visualisation has often been suggested as a method by which highly apprehensive students can reduce their levels of apprehension (Wongprasert & Ayres, 2000). It requires students to think of the presentation positively rather than what might go wrong and "students visualize themselves being rewarded, not punished, for their speech performance" (Kelly & Keaten, 2000, p.52). Cognitive-orientation modification (COM) therapy, advocated by Motley (1997) encourages students to view the presentation as an act of communication as opposed to a performance. Under COM therapy those who are highly apprehensive towards delivering presentations "are persuaded to discard their performance orientation" and adopt communication orientations (Wongprasert & Ayres, 2000, pp.10-11). This form of intervention is elaborated upon in the next chapter.

4.2.5 Focussing on Self-efficacy

In Chapter 2 it was mentioned that Hopf and Colby (1992) were the first to acknowledge the link between OCA and self-efficacy. They suggested that "[r]esearch could … profitably examine whether interventions that target self-efficacy issues are more effective in reducing CA than those that do not" (Hopf & Colby, 1992, p.133). Many of the interventions which have been suggested and discussed in this chapter encourage self-efficacy.

The possible link between PSA and self-efficacy was found in research by Hassall et al. (2013b) where they concluded that the "strong relationship between CA and self-efficacy is driven by the apprehension for 'presentation'" (Hassall et al., 2013b, p.166). Dwyer and Fus (2002) and Hassall et al. (2013b) suggest that methods recognised as increasing self-efficacy might be used as part of the strategy for reducing OCA. Orejudo et al. (2012) found that university students taking part in their intervention were simultaneously able to reduce their PSA and improve the self-efficacy towards public speaking. To this end "students should engage in practices that reduce speaker anxiety and increase self-efficacy in order to achieve assessment success and long-/longer term public speaking improvement" (Nash, Crimmins, & Oprescu, 2016, p.588). Hassall et al. (2013b, p.168) conclude that activities nurturing self-efficacy need to be considered for inclusion in interventions. The theme of self-efficacy is expanded upon in the next chapter.

4.3 Conclusion

This discussion of some of the interventions suggested for helping students to reduce PSA illustrates a variety of the choices available and demonstrates the need to consider a range of components if attempts at reducing PSA are to be successful. When considering which approach might be most effective in helping to reduce PSA, there is broad support for the introduction of a range of methods as part of the same intervention. Allen, Hunter and Donohue (1989, p.63) suggest that "the widest possible combination of methods" should be used when planning interventions, while Shanahan (2013, p.7) notes that "the best treatment for OCA appears to be a combination of behavioural and pedagogical interventions delivered in a supportive and positive atmosphere" and Beatty, McCroskey and Heisel (1998, p.214) refer to the "greater efficacy of multiple strategies" when considering interventions. As Bodie (2010, p.92) concludes, there now exists "a range of options when it comes to treating" OCA. This means that the call by Docan-Morgan and Schmidt (2012, p.18) "for teachers and course

designers to develop and test innovative techniques and activities" which aim to reduce PSA needs to be heeded. However, Finn, Sawyer and Schrodt (2009, p.104) note that while the benefits associated with interventions are widely reported, little research has addressed how or why improvements occur. This study, by investigating comments made by apprehensive presenters over the duration of the intervention in the current case, provides evidence how and why improvements occur in this particular context. With this in mind, the framework which supports the approach taken in the current case is discussed in the next chapter. While it draws on a number of the suggestions identified in this chapter, it ensures that a multifaceted approach can be incorporated which is underpinned by learning theory.

Chapter 5: Theoretical Framework and Application

5.1 Introduction

Research into the development of group presentations and the reduction of OCA reveals that many studies conducted in the area of oral presentations in accountancy education have often lacked any theoretical underpinning. Indeed, many reports which call for accounting students to develop skills, fail to establish how this can be achieved (St Pierre & Rebele, 2014, p.109). Despite this, progress has been made recently in beginning to address this apparent gap with Hassall and Joyce (2014) discussing how skills development might be incorporated into the accounting classroom and Byrne et al. (2012, p.577), focussing on oral communication, concluding that "research is needed to determine which pedagogical strategies are best suited to reducing high levels of OCA". While the focus in the current study is on the accounting classroom, the issue of a lack of theoretical underpinning for the development of presentation skills extends beyond this context. In surveys of relevant literature neither Brown and Morrissey (2004) nor van Ginkel et al. (2015) were able to find any frameworks which had become established as models for the development of oral presentation skills, while De Grez and Valcke (2010, p.179) conclude that "a clear theoretical base to direct oral presentation skills instruction" is lacking.

Given the apparent scarcity of theoretical support for approaches to oral presentation skills development, this chapter will develop a framework for the implementation of an approach to skills development in the classroom and specifically focusses on how skills development in the area of presenting to an audience might be achieved concurrently with helping students experiencing PSA to raise their confidence in this area. After establishing a framework which provides the theoretical basis of the approach adopted, the specific pedagogies underpinned by the theory included in the framework are

introduced. Finally, the classroom activities which form the basis of the intervention and which are underpinned by the framework are discussed.

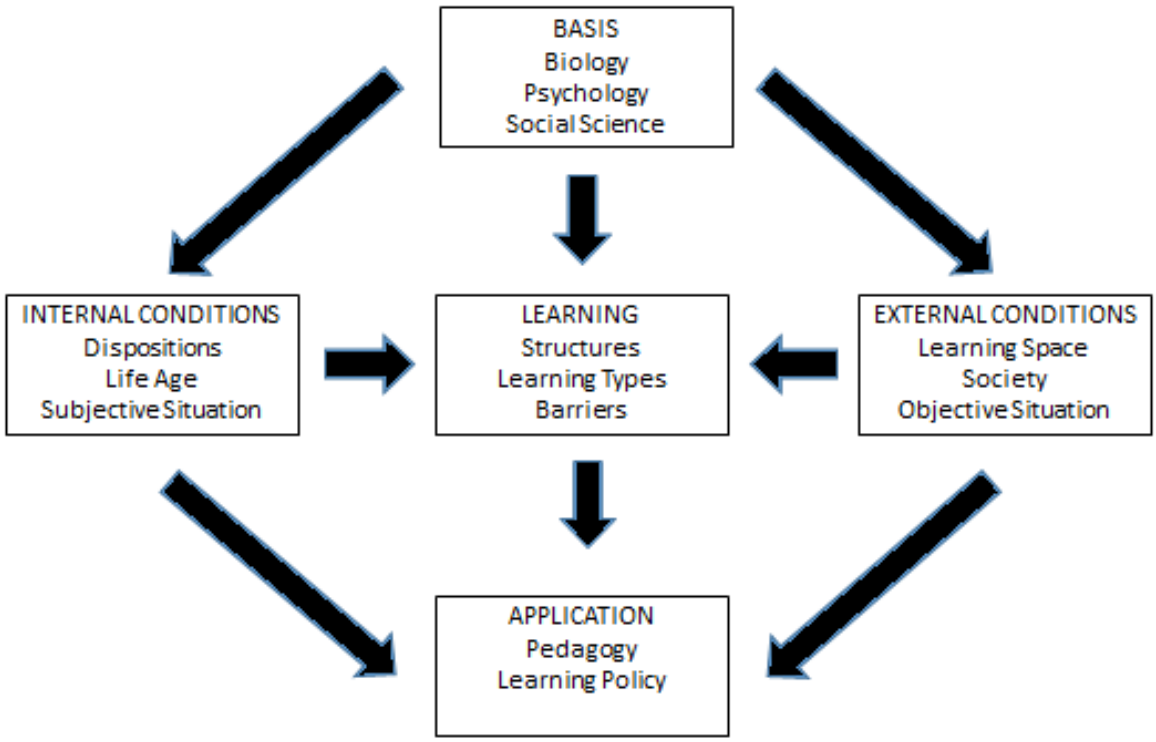
5.2 A General Model of Learning

Learning theories are often separated into categories (Savin-Baden, 2000). The categories are often broadly presented as those which place emphasis on the environment or the social nature of learning, known as social learning theories, and those which focus on the internal processes of the individual, known as psychological learning theories (Henderson, 1984, p.4; Illeris, 2003a, p.398). Internal learning is often further categorised with, for example, Illeris (2003a) presenting his theory of learning as having internal learning which spans cognitive and emotional functions (Illeris, 2003a, p.398). It is often the case that discussions of learning focus on one element in isolation and ignore the others (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p.5). However, in order to study learning we must account for both internal and external perspectives of learning simultaneously (Illeris, 2003a, p.398; Jarvis, 2009a, p.32; Phillips & Soltis, 2009, p.62), recognising that they "are not just two poles of a dialectical relation but that each permeates the other" (Allal, 2001, p.411); greater synthesis between the dimensions is necessary (Schoenfeld, 1999). Indeed, despite the undoubted complexity of learning, Illeris (2009, p.18) acknowledges that "it is a very complicated matter", any discussion about learning needs to take a broad view if that discussion can be considered "adequate and reliable" (Illeris, 2009, p.18) and care needs to be taken with any model of learning since many "reduce the diversity of reality" (Illeris, 2007, p.156).

In an attempt to account for the different facets of learning and to provide a broad overview, Illeris (2009, pp.7-8) has constructed a model of learning which is designed to "include all the conditions that influence and are influenced by this process". Figure 5.1 shows Illeris's diagrammatic representation of this process. It shows four elements of learning. He begins with the 'Basis' of learning which, while acknowledging the existence

of biological conditions, Illeris (2009, p.8) emphasises is the integration of the internal psychological process and the individual's external interactions. Both of these conditions "must be active" if learning is to occur (Illeris, 2007, p.22). He then has learning itself which includes "its processes and dimensions, different learning types and learning barriers" as well as the conditions, both internal to the learner and external under which the learning takes place (Illeris, 2009, p.8). He finally has the applications of learning which Jarvis (2010, p.105) describes as the outcomes, namely pedagogy and learning policy. Therefore, while many learning theories try to explain just one of these processes, meaning they cannot explain the whole process of learning, this model provides a framework for the integration of multiple learning theories. The conceptualisation of learning is holistic, recognising that learning occurs in a variety of ways, building on established theories to "develop an overall understanding" (Illeris, 2009, p.7). Illeris's structure is used to provide a broad framework for the current study. Despite other frameworks being available, Illeris's has the advantage of being able to incorporate "complex and competing" explanations of learning (Newell-Jones & Lord, 2008, p.16). Given the complex nature of the causes of PSA already discussed and the need to address the multiple objectives of skills development and CA reduction, a multifaceted approach to learning seems the most appropriate.

Figure 5.1 The Main Areas of the Understanding of Learning

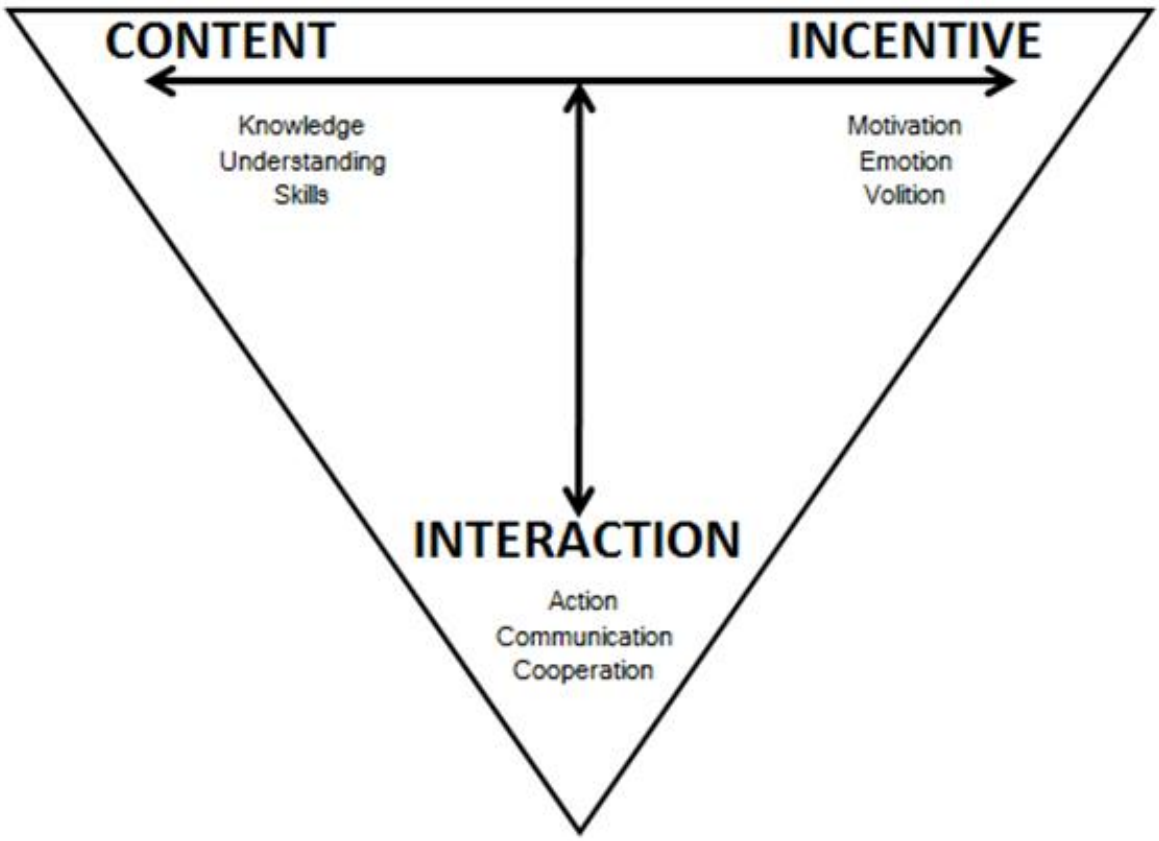


Source: Illeris (2009, p.8)

5.3 Dimensions of Learning

Illeris sees learning as taking place in three dimensions (see Figure 5.2). He first has an interaction process, represented by the vertical line, which recognises that learning is an "interaction between the individual and his or her environment" (Illeris, 2009, p.22). Then in the individual, represented by the horizontal line in Figure 5.2, he represents the psychological processes. For this he has at one end the content dimension and at the other the incentive dimension (Illeris, 2009, p.24). The content dimension concerns what the individual learns while the incentive dimension concerns the "motivation, emotions and will" of the individual which drive the learning (Illeris, 2009, p.24). While the three dimensions can be theoretically treated separately, in reality they form one integrated process (Ritchie, 2007, p.204).

Figure 5.2 The Three Dimensions of Learning and Competence Development

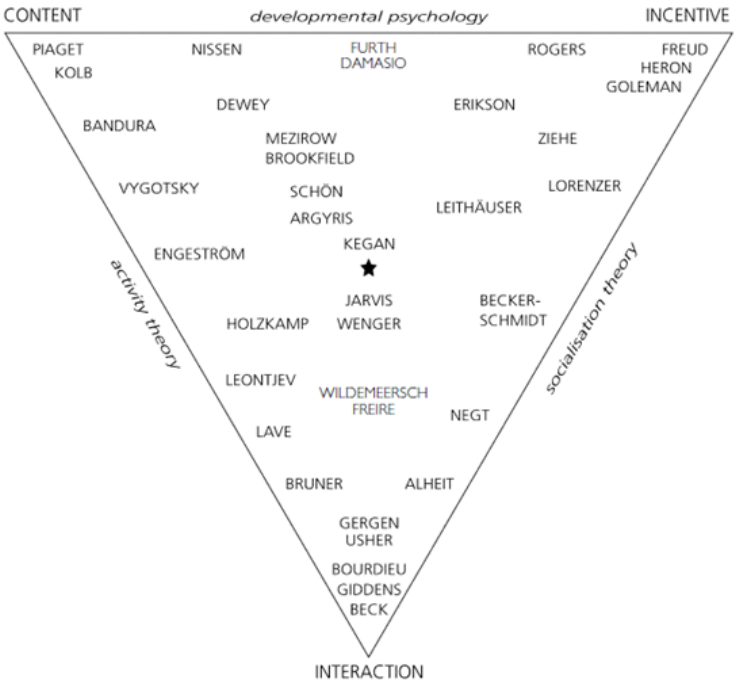


Source: Illeris (2009, p.10)

A survey of the learning theory literature suggests that Illeris's model has few critics. Despite this, Jarvis sees the model as over reliant on psychology at the expense of sociology and consideration of other possible disciplines (Jarvis, 2009b). Jarvis further takes issue with Illeris's model by indicating that there is no elaboration of how learning occurs in the incentive dimension (Jarvis, 2010). Despite this criticism, the model provides a clear basis on which to develop integrated models of learning. As a framework it allows for learning theories to be positioned in relation to each other and where they have elements in common allows for overlap. In reality it is possible for a number of theories to be relevant to any given learning context and while a learning context may be designed which is underpinned by a particular theory, individual differences mean that we may find different processes being activated in reality.

Illeris (2009, p.257) maps various theories to his three dimensional model (see Figure 5.3). Thus, psychologists appear at the top of the model along the horizontal line with those aligned with content related theory, such as Piaget and Kolb, to the left and those related to incentive, such as Freud, to the right. The bottom of the model is where Illeris places the sociologists. Towards the middle of the model are those theorists who Illeris describes as having holistic learning theories. Two of these theorists whose works are major influences on the approach taken in the current study are Jarvis, whose theory of learning includes experiential learning and reflection but which also recognises the social nature of learning, and Wenger whose situated learning theory is a principal tenet of the activities at the centre of the approach adopted.

Figure 5.3 Positions in the Tension Field of Learning



Source: Illeris (2007, p.257)

Illeris describes his model as "basically constructivist in nature" (Illeris, 2003a, p.401). However, given the inconsistent way in which the notion of constructivism is used (Schunk, 2012, p.230) this requires some clarification. Illeris explains that

constructivism assumes that learners actively build up their "learning as mental structures" (Illeris, 2003b, p.361). This then results in learners developing learning which builds and compares what they have already learned with the new information. This means that each individual makes their own meaning dependent on the new information and their existing mental structure; this results in new knowledge. However, unlike traditional conceptions of constructivism Illeris's model, with its incentive and environment dimensions, is more complex. Indeed,

> it differs from mainstream learning theory by taking in emotional, motivational, social and societal angles as being equally as important as the cognitive side of learning, and by including such issues as mis-learning, defence and resistance as important elements of the conception (Illeris, 2003b, pp.358-9).

The model, while more complex, bears similarities to Vygotsky's concept of social constructivism which enables the linking of internal learning, particularly cognitive learning, with theories of social learning. A social constructivist view of learning builds on Piaget's constructivist view of learning which holds that we develop new knowledge in the context of knowledge we already hold (Biggs and Tang, 2011, p.22). Therefore, classrooms which acknowledge this view of learning recognise that the students "build knowledge in terms of what they already understand" (Biggs and Tang, 2011, p.22). The type of classroom that is built on a constructivist view of learning facilitates change rather than simply promoting the acquisition of new information (Biggs and Tang, 2011, p.23). Illeris's Internal Content Dimension is largely based on Piaget's work on constructivism.

5.3.1 Internal Learning: The Content Dimension

The content dimension of Illeris's model concerns what is learned which has often been seen as "knowledge and skills and, perhaps, attitudes" (Illeris, 2007, p.52). However, Illeris notes that this dimension is now generally considered much broader and can include many items such as opinions and competencies (Illeris, 2007, p.24). In terms of cognition, Illeris (2007) discusses four types of learning: cumulation, assimilation, accommodation and transformation. He explains that he arrives at the typology by elaborating on Piaget's original concepts of assimilation and accommodation (Illeris, 2007, p.38).

Cumulation or cumulative learning takes place when a new mental schema is formed in the individual's mind (Illeris, 2009, p.13). What is learned is unconnected to any previous learning which is why it is most prevalent during early years (Illeris, 2009, p.13). This form of learning is unlikely to have relevance to the context of public speaking. Even where a student has no experience of speaking to an audience, they will probably have been part of an audience and will therefore have some knowledge on which to build. Indeed, cumulative learning is only relevant in contexts which have no relation to any previous learning and "can only be recalled and applied in situations mentally similar to the learning context" (Illeris, 2009, p.13).

The most common form of learning is assimilative learning (Illeris, 2009, p.13). It is "additional learning" in that the individual is building on prior knowledge (Illeris, 2007, p.40). In the current context it is likely that the majority of the students will have had some experience of speaking to an audience and that most of those who have not will have formed an idea of the activity. Accommodative learning is a form of learning which the individual initially has difficulty incorporating since it challenges an established mental schema (Illeris, 2009, p.13). The individual has to initially abandon some previous learning in order to incorporate the new learning. This may be a form of learning that many students who are fearful of speaking in public may need to experience in order to overcome this fear and develop their presentation skills. Finally,

transformative learning is similar to accommodative learning in that prior learning is challenged (Illeris, 2007, p.44). However, in the case of transformative learning multiple mental schemata are challenged and restructured (Illeris, 2007, p.44). The concept of transformative learning was first introduced by Mezirow in 1978 (Illeris, 2014) and involves "a paradigm shift, whereby we critically examine our prior interpretations and assumptions to form new meaning" (Pardíñaz-Solís & Hastings, 2015, p.1). For those exhibiting PSA whose negative perceptions of oral presentations and themselves as public speakers have more than one cause then the learning required is likely to be in part underpinned by transformative learning. Not only does the individual have to change multiple perceptions relating to presentations, they also have to learn how to deliver a presentation.

With Illeris's conceptualisation of the content dimension in mind and given that student cohorts are likely to be diverse and bring a variety of prior experiences to the learning process, it is likely to mean that there are "vast differences in the new sense which different participants make of their experiences" (Newell-Jones & Lord, 2008, p.17). Given that any group of students in a classroom will have varying levels of experience, it is likely that more than one of the types of learning outlined by Illeris will occur for the same activity. If an individual experiences accommodation, then this is likely to need a longer process of learning than assimilation and is likely to require more energy and reinforcement. Similarly, if a student is in a situation in which the learning is transformational then this is likely to require even greater energy and reinforcement. However, as has already been established, the content dimension is one of three learning dimensions and the quality of learning will also depend on the other two dimensions of the learning process.

5.3.2 Internal Learning: The Incentive Dimension

The incentive dimension is concerned with the mental energy which drives learning and therefore "motivation, emotion, attitudes and volition invested by the individual" (Illeris, 2007, p.95). This is an important area in the process of developing oral presentation skills (De Grez & Valcke, 2010, p.187). Illeris (2007, p.88) notes that the limits between these concepts are not clear. Indeed, the large number of competing definitions for each of these concepts makes the task of delineating them problematic. If motivation is taken to mean motivation driven by free choice then this is likely to include volition (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Distinguishing between motivation and volition has been the subject of longstanding debate (Heckhausen, 2007). Volition emphasises drive from within the individual to achieve previously set goals (Heckhausen, 2007). This further establishes volition as a component of motivation. A definition of motivation provided by Keller (1983, p.389), "Motivation refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect", would seem to support the notion that volition should be considered as a part of motivation. A similar conclusion might be drawn regarding the relationship between attitude and motivation. However, a positive attitude does not necessarily result in motivated behaviour (Ro, 2013, p.216). A widely used definition of motivation is provided by Williams and Burden (1997, p.120) who suggest that motivation is "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal." Adopting this definition, in terms of the drive for learning, emotions can be seen as an element in determining motivation.

The importance of the incentive dimension is highlighted by Miller and Boud (1996, p.10) who argue that "[e]motions and feelings are key pointers both to possibilities for, and barriers to, learning", and Nash et al. (2016, p.597) who, writing in the context of PSA, see learning as primarily based on emotion which in turn influences learner motivation. Despite the importance attached to this element of learning, it is relatively unexplored

when compared with the content dimension of learning (Illeris, 2007, p.75). Indeed, Jarvis (2010, p.123) claims that emotions did not until recently feature prominently in learning theories. In addition to being relatively unexplored, the incentive dimension is complex. However, since the current study is concerned with the development of oral presentation skills and how PSA can be reduced, knowledge of the incentive dimension is important in the development of the approach. If learning opportunities presented to students do not ensure that they account for the incentive dimension, then for those students who do not have sufficient drive there is no real learning opportunity due to the barrier presented by this dimension. As a result, an understanding of emotions in learning and motivations to learn can help ensure that oral presentation exercises are more inclusive than they would be if this were left to chance. This then enables some students who might otherwise have avoided such activities to engage in them.

As has already been mentioned, Illeris's dimensions of learning form an integrated process. Illeris (2007) emphasises this point by discussing the similarity between the learning processes occurring in the content dimension and the incentive dimension. He particularly emphasises how a process of assimilation and accommodation which occurs in the content dimension, can be complemented by similar learning in the incentive dimension. He uses as an example how individuals may eliminate their prejudices towards "the opposite sex or other ethnic groups" which at the same time may influence the emotions towards them (Illeris, 2007, p.83). This seems to be a suitable analogy for those who are anxious about delivering oral presentations. If they learn that speaking in public is not what they thought it was; that their perception of the general activity was wrong then it is likely that along with the content; for example, knowledge of what constitutes a good presentation and a level of competence in public speaking, they will also have different emotions towards public speaking which would include a reduced fear of such activities.

There might be many reasons why students may not have the motivation to learn and part of the difficulty in addressing this area has been what Williams, Burden, and Lanvers (2002, p.505) describe as the "bewildering complexity of ideas and findings" in the area of motivation to learn. Despite the range of possible theories explaining motivation to learn, a subset of theories relates directly to the individual's expectations of success. These theories are often collectively termed expectancy-value theories (Williams et al., 2002, p.505) of which one, self-efficacy, has already been identified as having a close relation to PSA. Self-efficacy therefore forms an important part of the current framework despite Illeris not specifically mentioning it in his model. If barriers to learning that exist in the form of PSA can be lowered as a result of the approach taken which is informed by self-efficacy, then this allows the potential for learning to take place where previously there would have been no learning. It is therefore somewhat surprising that Illeris, while discussing motivation as part of the incentive dimension, appears not to have discussed self-efficacy, nor any other expectancy-value theories in texts explaining his three dimensional model of learning.

5.3.2.1 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy was first identified as a psychological construct by Bandura in 1977 (Schunk & Pajares, 2009) and is defined by Bandura (1997, p.3) as "the beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments". Beliefs that individuals hold about self-efficacy are concerned with competencies (Maddux & Volkmann, 2014, p.316) which means that the concept can apply to oral communication. Furthermore, the beliefs that individuals hold about their self-efficacy are not generalisations but apply to specific situations (Maddux & Volkmann, 2014, p.316). This implies that individual self-efficacy may be specific to particular oral communication contexts. In fact, it has been suggested that there may be a strong negative correlation between self-efficacy and OCA (see Hopf & Colby, 1992; Hassall et al., 2013b) with PSA the main driver of this relationship (Hassall et al., 2013b).

The importance of considering self-efficacy as part of the design of programmes aimed at developing oral presentation competence is emphasised by van Ginkel et al. (2015) who, based on a meta study of research between 1990 and 2012, propose "Seven Design Principles for Developing Oral Presentation Competence" (p.68) (see Figure 5.4). The principles emphasise the importance of considering the promotion of self-efficacy as key to the development of oral presentation competence with self-efficacy mentioned in four of the seven principles and the remaining three embodying sources of self-efficacy mentioned by Bandura.

Figure 5.4 Seven Design Principles for Developing Oral Presentation Competence in HE

Instruction

1. *Ensure that learning objectives are communicated explicitly to students and are specifically formulated in relation to criteria of oral presentations in order to increase self-efficacy beliefs and oral presentation competence.*
2. *Ensure that the learning task – the presentation assignment – is related to content of the particular discipline considered as relevant by students, the complexity of the task develops through the course and students perceive the context of the task as 'authentic' to enhance self-efficacy beliefs, oral presentation competence and to decrease communication apprehension.*

Learning Activities

3. *Provide opportunities for students to observe models of peers or experts to increase self-efficacy beliefs and oral presentation competence.*
4. *Provide opportunities for students to practice their oral presentations in order to develop their oral presentation competence and to decrease their communication apprehension.*

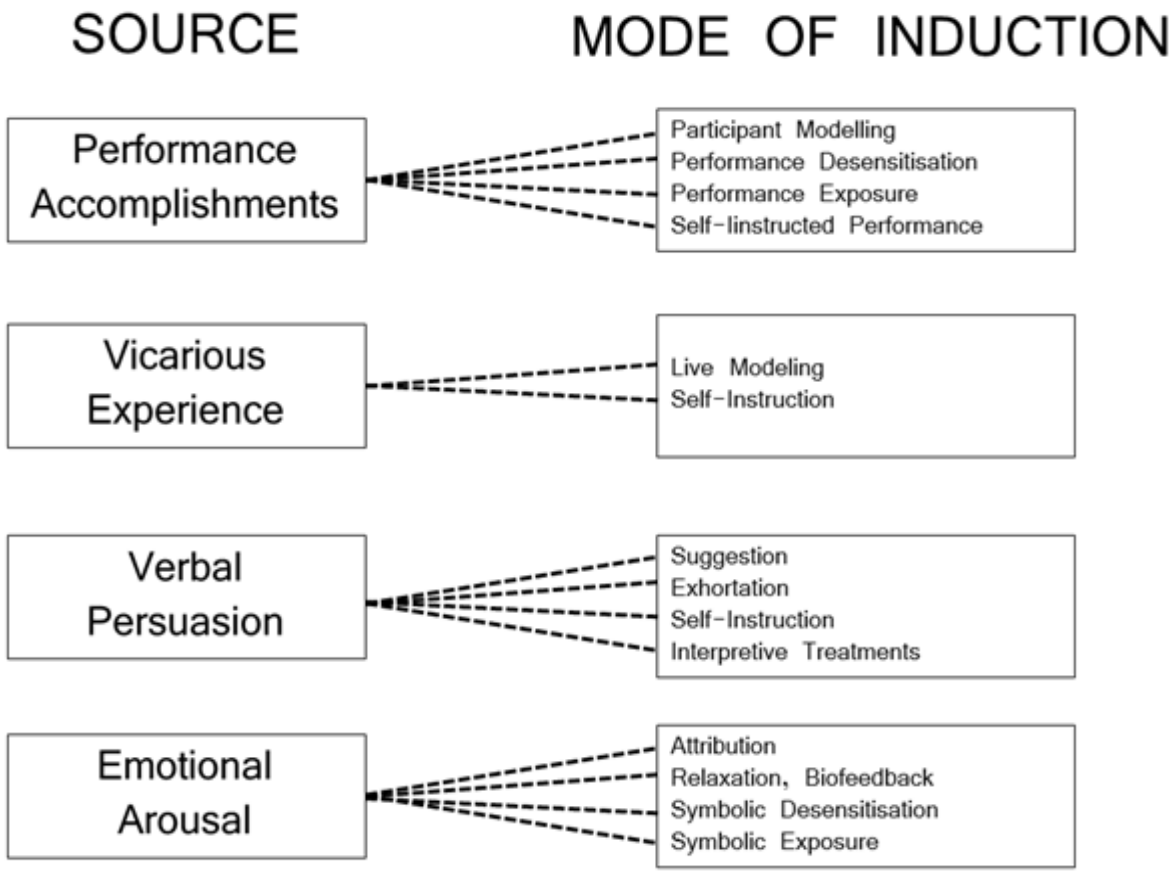
Assessment Strategy

5. *Ensure that feedback is explicit, contextual, adequately timed and of suitable intensity in order to improve students' oral presentation competence.*
6. *Encourage the involvement of peers in formative assessment processes in order to develop students' oral presentation competence and attitudes towards presenting.*
7. *Facilitate self-assessment using videotaping and portfolios to encourage students' self-efficacy beliefs, oral presentation competence and attitudes towards presenting.*

Source: van Ginkel et al. (2015, p.68)

Mitchell (2008, p.78) sees the development of self-efficacy as central to student engagement, claiming that those exhibiting high self-efficacy "are more likely to engage with more demanding tasks, and expend more effort and persist longer with tasks". Bandura (1977, p.195) explains that in his "social learning analysis, expectations of personal efficacy are based on four major sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (see Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5 Efficacy Expectations



Source: Bandura (1977, p.195)

5.3.2.1.1 Performance Accomplishments

Performance accomplishments, also known as mastery experience, "is the most powerful source of efficacy information. The perception that a performance has been successful tends to raise efficacy beliefs, contributing to the expectation that performance will be proficient in the future" (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004, p.5). This means that self-efficacy can be developed through practice. These experiences, if positive, are likely to develop self-efficacy; however, if the individual fails in the activity then self-efficacy is likely to diminish (Maddux & Volkmann, 2014, p.317).

Hassall et al. (2013b, 168) emphasise the strong influence of mastery experience and explain that Bandura identified three components. These relate to the level of reality, the success experienced and the degree to which it contributes "to the attainment of an overarching immediate or long-term goal" (Hassall, et al., 2013b, p.168). In terms of oral presentations this means self-efficacy can be nurtured through the careful design of classroom activities so that they are seen as purposeful by the participants and that they see the experience as a positive one. Furthermore, this can be supported by encouraging students to practise outside of class. Ayres et al. (1998) investigated the benefits of building practice into courses. They found that students with PSA "who practiced … reported lower public speaking apprehension and felt more willing to communicate than those in the other conditions" (Ayres et al., 1998, p.170). The importance of practice has also been recognised by students who experience PSA. In research by Fanney (2013, p.18) "most students agreed the most effective way to combat speech anxiety was to repeatedly practice speaking in public." Also, promoting the likelihood of success through practice is likely to reduce the fear of negative evaluation which has a strong association with reticence (Hazel, Keaten, & Kelly, 2014, p.345).

As well as encouraging mastery of oral presentations the process of practising can also act to desensitise those who feel apprehensive. Nash et al. (2016, p.596) found in their study of an intervention which included practice that "students … experienced less fear, indecision and confusion." Also, with regular carefully structured practice habituation may occur. This is when the apprehensive presenter learns after repeated practising that the context of public speaking is not as problematic as had been feared and that positive feelings may be gained which may eventually override the negative feelings (Finn, Sawyer, & Schrodt, 2009). Moreover, by providing opportunities for students to practise their presentations they are given focus and are likely to gain confidence in their ability to deliver the topic (Allen et al., 2008). Finally, despite the strong evidence in favour of practice as a means to build self-efficacy in presenting, Griffiths (2000, p.139) claims that students often disregard or afford low importance to the strategy. In her survey of undergraduates, when the respondents were asked to choose their three favoured options for the preparation of oral presentations, practice was omitted by over 60 per cent (Griffiths, 2000, pp.139-140).

5.3.2.1.2 Vicarious Experiences

"A weaker but still important source of self-efficacy belief is vicarious experience" (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.173). Mitchell (2008, p.78) mentions vicarious experiences and explains that it is a source of self-efficacy which can be gained by the observation of others. By observing others individuals are able to form expectations about how they might behave themselves in similar situations (Maddux & Volkmann, 2014, p.317). Observing others undertake tasks that seem threatening but that appear to yield no "adverse consequences can generate expectations in observers that they too will improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts" (Bandura, 1977, p.197). Indeed, If an individual notices "that a peer has successfully completed a task … this success then strengthens the individual's belief in their own abilities." (Hassall et al., 2013a, p.173). The vicarious experience may be through the observation of presentations delivered by

peers (Yurekli, Isiksal, & Cakiroglu, 2015, p.1303) but could also derive from the critical observation made by students of "lectures and other public talks they attend" (Hay, 1994, p.48).

5.3.2.1.3 Verbal Persuasion

The third source of self-efficacy, verbal or social persuasion, is described by Mitchell (2008, p.78) as "the validation of one's own efforts by significant others". Social or verbal persuasion is another source of self-efficacy which, while acknowledged as a weaker source (Hassall, et al. 2013b, p.168), can "when coupled with models of success and positive direct experience" support the development of self-efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004, p.6). However, the power of this source of self-efficacy "depends on the credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise of the persuader" (Goddard et al., 2004, p.6 citing Bandura, 1986). Hassall et al. (2013b, p.168) support this by focussing on feedback as an example, stating that credible positive feedback can help build self-efficacy but that negative feedback can be detrimental.

Building on the principles of contributing student pedagogy (CSP), which values the contributions of peers (Hamer, Luxton-Reilly, Purchase, & Sheard, 2011) and is discussed in detail in Section 5.5.3, the feedback should include peer as well as tutor feedback. Few studies have considered the views held by students concerning peer assessment (De Grez et al., 2012, p.132). However, issues such as "bias or a lack of seriousness in approaching such exercises" (Lapham & Webster, 1999, p.188) and concern over a lack of anonymity (Langan, et al., 2005) are two issues noted by De Grez et al. (2012, p.132). Despite these potential weaknesses in peer assessment, Topping (1998, p.260) concludes that "the relatively few outcome studies of peer assessment of presentations have found improved confidence and better presentation and appraisal skills." When investigating the impact of feedback on the development of presentation competence, van Ginkel, Gulikers, Biemans and Mulder (2017, p.1680), while identifying feedback from teachers as having the greatest impact, suggest that with sufficient

training and the deployment of "detailed rubrics … the provision of effective peer feedback among students" can be facilitated.

As well as the use of feedback on presentations verbal persuasion might be in the form of exhortation (Bandura, 1977). Byrne et al. (2012, p.578) found in their study that "highly-apprehensive students are willing to discuss their communication fears, but may only do so when in a one-to-one confidential, supportive environment. This indicates that support for those with high OCA may need to happen at the individual level." While Byrne et al. (2012) note that resourcing such an approach may be difficult financially, its adoption for those with high levels of PSA may be necessary.

In the module in which the current intervention occurs, the idea of peer assessment and feedback is established early. Before the first presentation exercise is conducted the students have already conducted peer reviews of three pieces of written work. This helps to establish the credibility of the use of peer feedback with the students. Furthermore, for the first presentation the feedback comments are restricted so that presenters are given feedback on what was good. Taking this approach is aimed at establishing the peer involvement in the feedback process as credible and valued and as a result more likely to contribute to establishing self-efficacy.

5.3.2.1.4 Emotional and Physiological Arousal

The final aspect contributing to self-efficacy is "emotional and physiological arousal" which Mitchell explains as "noting one's state of anxiety or enthusiasm" (Mitchell, 2008, p.78). This is something that students may not be inclined to dwell on, particularly if they find the experiences unpleasant. However, this might be encouraged through the use of reflection and might result in a number of techniques which have been suggested might encourage self-efficacy. These include visualisation and relaxation. The use of visualisation is discussed by Hamilton and Creel (2016, p.266) who emphasise that this should be akin to a professional sports person imagining the successful execution of

moves. For the greatest success the visualisation should be "detailed, positive, and vivid" (Hamilton & Creel, 2016, p.266).

5.3.2.2 Further Aspects of the Incentive Dimension

Illeris claims to have been the first to treat emotional learning as equal in status to cognitive learning (Illeris, 2012, p.22). In discussing the incentive dimension, he mentions a variety of concepts which are relevant. He takes as his starting point Freud and his view of what drives us, has incorporated Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence, Heron's theory of feeling and parenthood and Maslow's hierarchy of needs in his discussion. However, as has previously been mentioned, he does not include self-efficacy in his considerations despite much of his writing seeming to point towards self-efficacy as potentially having a strong role in the incentive dimension. Indeed, others also point to self-efficacy as relating to Illeris's incentive dimension, for example, Morgan (2006). Furthermore, given the suggested relation between self-efficacy and OCA, it may be a key element of the incentive dimension, particularly when considering the question of what approach might be taken to reduce PSA and develop presentation skills in the same intervention. Illeris (2014, p.583) identifies motivation as being important in learning but he discusses this in relation to the transformative learning of Mezirow and emphasises the potential barriers that learners my exhibit when encountering such learning. It would seem that low self-efficacy might fall into this category for some and therefore provides another reason for incorporating it into the framework of the current study.

In spite of the activities mentioned which might enhance self-efficacy, this is just one element of a range of possible elements concerning motivation which contribute to the incentive dimension. Where an element is determined outside the classroom it may not be possible to design interventions which enable students to learn. One example of such

a determinant of motivation is the Hierarchy of Needs which was first proposed by Maslow in the 1940s. Maslow proposed that our motivation is determined by levels of needs, from the most basic physiological need for air to breathe, water to drink and food to eat, through needs of safety, belonging and esteem before the highest need of self-actualisation (Gray, 2015, p.127). Maslow's suggestion was that needs lowest in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals have sufficient motivation to begin to attend to needs at the next level (Gray, 2015, p.127). Therefore, if a need lower in the hierarchy than learning is not being satisfied, it is likely that the students will not have motivation to learn since they will be preoccupied with the lower need. If this lack of motivation to learn is derived from a need determined outside the classroom, then there may not be any intervention available to the educator that can address the resistance to learning. Therefore, by way of example, a student may be away from home and have some very basic needs to satisfy for the first time themselves. If they have not satisfied these needs (for example, they have not found permanent accommodation) then they may be preoccupied with this and may not have their mind on the learning.

It is important to note that Maslow's ideas are not universally accepted; indeed, Illeris (2007, p.90) criticises the Hierarchy of Needs for being presented by Maslow as having "categories [which] are assumed to exist as general human entities". He then suggests that Maslow's categories are representative of the cultural context in which he lived "one can easily come to see the well-meaning hierarchy as a picture of the ideals of the rising white American middle class in the 1950s" (Illeris, 2007, p.90). Therefore, while a less specific representation of Maslow's categories may apply more generally, it is still possible that for some Maslow's theory is not relevant.

Most of the discussion of the incentive dimension presented here has focussed on motivation and within that the expectancy-value theory of self-efficacy has been presented as a key feature for the focus of the current study. This does not diminish the possible importance of other expectancy-value theories such as learned helplessness or attribution theory. Nor does it seek to disregard the important role that emotions play in

learning. However, given the undoubted complexity of the dimension and the potential that focussing on sources of self-efficacy has for gaining improvements in PSA, this concept forms the main focus of the incentive dimension in this study.

5.3.3 Social Learning: The Interaction Dimension

The discussion so far has focussed on those learning theories which are either entirely or mostly based on internal learning processes. The discussion now turns to the social aspect of learning which Illeris (2009) describes as the interaction dimension. Illeris (2007) maps a variety of theorists in this dimension but at the centre of the model he has two whose theories are key in the current framework. One of these theorists is Jarvis (2009a) who explains that his model of adult learning accounts for the social aspects of learning which psychological learning theories have omitted. However, situated learning theory, developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and particularly communities of practice which Wenger developed from situated learning theory (Ractham & Firpo, 2011), and are associated with social constructivism, are the main theories underpinning much of the activity in the approach taken in the module.

5.3.3.1 Situated Learning and Communities of Practice

Situated learning theory holds that we learn best when "learning is embedded in the social context in which new knowledge and skills" are to be employed (Rush, Acton, Tolley, Marks-Maran, & Burke, 2010, p.470). While situated learning theory sees the learning taking place in real contexts, it has been suggested that it may also underpin classroom simulations (Lunce, 2006) and particularly those in vocational subjects (Rush et al., 2010). Unlike an apprenticeship model, in which the novices learn from an experienced practitioner, situated learning sees learners as part of a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). These communities of practice are everywhere,

including in educational institutions, but usually they do not have a means by which learning that might take place is recognised (Wenger, 2009). Wenger (2009), while focussed mainly on how learning can occur in communities in general, sees the notion of communities of practice as relevant to the classroom.

> What does look promising are inventive ways of engaging students in meaningful practices, of providing access to resources that enhance their participation, of opening their horizons so they can put themselves on learning trajectories they can identify with, and of involving them in actions, discussions, and reflections that make a difference to the communities that they value (Wenger, 2009, p.215).

Fenton-O'Creevy, Brigham, Jones and Smith (2015) develop this by discussing how students cross "boundaries in landscapes of practice" and how their "individual trajectories in communities of practice" are not all the same. This means that some feel a greater commitment to the academic world and student life while others may have a greater commitment to the profession or their previous communities. This is also influenced by their previous experiences meaning that students transitioning into study at university have "the difficult process of negotiating the extent to which aspects of identity formed elsewhere are expressible in the new context" (Fenton-O'Creevy, Dimitriadis, & Scobie, 2015, p.33). Added to this challenge for many accountancy students is the misconception held by many of the profession, meaning that for many the community they were expecting to enter is somewhat different to its reality. Fenton-O'Creevy, Brigham et al. (2015, p.47) consider student nurses transitioning between work and academic study and focus on the issues that these students have in "developing multiple identities and in expressing their competence with unfamiliar practices". While the backgrounds of students in different contexts may vary, the notion of transitioning and the challenges presented still exist. Students studying accountancy come from a variety of backgrounds with varying expectations and as with other contexts "[m]any of the concerns expressed by students reflect both the anxieties involved as they become subject to a different regime of competence and their highly

provisional commitment to the practices of the academic community" (Fenton-O'Creevy, Brigham et al., 2015, p.47). In their study Fenton-O'Creevy, Brigham et al. (2015) found the nursing students emphasised the importance of peer support and mentors as well as time to reflect on their learning. In emphasising the important role of reflection, Fenton-O'Creevy, Hutchinson, Kubiak, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p156) state that "the link between practice and coursework is brought to life through writing assignments that involve structured reflection on a practice episode".

Despite the apparent attractiveness of promoting skills learning opportunities in the classroom, there is not universal agreement that this can be achieved. One area of criticism concerns the suitability of promoting skills within disciplines. Writing in the context of accounting education St Pierre and Rebele (2014, p.109) question how the delivery of skills can be accommodated in a curriculum which should "cover the required technical topics" and question whether those teaching accountancy have the expertise to teach the required skills. Further criticism comes from those who question whether employment related skills can be usefully developed in a study environment at all. The transfer of skills from one context to another cannot be assumed to take place automatically "although transfer is essential if key skills development is to be worthwhile" (Washer, 2007, p.59). Holmes (2001, p.117), a strong critic of the "skills agenda" (see Holmes, 2000), argues that tasks given to students "should be used explicitly and intentionally in relation to the practices within the occupational arena." Indeed, Jones (2010, p.18), writing in the context of accounting education, asserts that communication is one of many "generic attributes" which are dependent on "the disciplinary context" and should therefore be taught as part of the discipline. A final criticism relates specifically to the question of whether such skills can be taught at all. Specifically discussing presentation skills Shephard (2005, pp.28-29) expresses concern over the "lack of credible underpinning theory and supporting evidence" which can support the teaching of such skills.

Despite the doubt cast over the value of a skills agenda, Turner (2014, p.593) states that self-belief is nurtured "through the development of skills within the context of the disciplinary curriculum." With self-belief established, Turner (2014, p.593) concludes that the "positive attitude" which the Confederation of British Industry (2009, p.8) claims underpins all employability attributes, can be developed.

The approach presented in the module considered in this study is underpinned by the view of learning presented by communities of practice. It provides the students with a framework in which to begin to recognise their community of practice and through interacting with their peers begin to construct an identity which incorporates the development of relevant skills. In addition, it provides time to reflect on their own practice but also learn how others in their community are coping with similar learning processes. Indeed, Wenger (1998) emphasises the importance of the learning community and how membership of the community, social interactions and the experiences gained are important in learning. Lave and Wenger (1991, p.29) explain that central to situated learning is "legitimate peripheral participation". This concept is a necessarily complex one which Lave and Wenger (1991, p.36) explain needs to be understood as a whole. It allows for learners to take on different positions in the community of practice. Fenwick (2001, p.35) explains that this view of learning sees newcomers as initially operating at the margins by "observing, practicing a little, getting to know and interact with a few community members, and thus gradually becoming integrated into the network of action".

Situated learning theory is central to the current framework, in the same way that it is central in Illeris's model. This is the case not only for its underpinning of the general approach but also since it supports PBL and CSP which are two applications of the framework which will be discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, another important feature highlighted by Wenger (2009) is that situated learning and communities of practice should not preclude other theories which might underpin learning. This therefore enables the framework to draw on learning theory already mentioned from other

dimensions and also allows for the incorporation of theory which occupies adjacent territory. Experiential learning is a case in point, being central to the framework and which is discussed in the next section.

5.3.3.2 Experiential Learning

"Situated learning allows the incorporation of other learning perspectives and includes workplace learning and experiential learning" (Mann, 2011, p.60). The degree to which experiential learning can be considered as part of situated learning is a matter of debate. Indeed, "[t]he concept of situated learning has parallels with that of experiential learning" (Hassall & Joyce, 2014, p.386). Furthermore, Quay (2003) sees the concept of legitimate peripheral participation as a way of looking beyond experiential learning as a purely internal process.

> The view of experiential education provided through situated learning, via the context of learning (as community of practice), and the activity of learning (as legitimate peripheral participation), is invaluable as it theorizes possibilities for learning in experiential education beyond the way it is often modeled as an internalized process (Quay, 2003, p.111).

Dennick (2014), in explaining Experiential Learning Theory, describes experiential learning as the mechanism by which learning can occur. Kolb's model of experiential learning is widely used to explain this form of learning. Kolb (1984) explained that learning was best conceived as a process rather than an outcome and that an essential part of the experiential learning process was reflection. While Jarvis (2009a, p.23) recognised that Kolb's model of experiential learning, in common with all "psychological models of learning", was flawed since it did not incorporate any social dimension, if used alongside situated learning it helps to explain how learning occurs in the current context. Furthermore, while experiential learning has been mainly applied to learning in

vocational contexts in workplaces, it can be applied to learning in educational contexts (Dennick, 2014, p.59). This is one of the parallels since the same conclusion can be drawn for situated learning; as has already been mentioned, despite situated learning being proposed to explain workplace learning, it can extend to educational contexts. Indeed, Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993, p.8) claim that it "is the foundation of, and the stimulus for learning". Dennick (2014, pp.59-60) explains that experiential learning is facilitated by ensuring that the learners have suitable experiences which might be part of a community of practice. He emphasises the importance of providing for reflection and that feedback will enhance this process. Furthermore, the learning process is further enhanced if students have time to map literature to their experiences, are able to create action plans for future experiences and can record the learning in a portfolio (Dennick, 2014, pp.59-60).

"Reflection is critical to the experiential learning process" (Harkness, Kuchinsky, & Pappas 2011, p.654) enabling the integration of "incoming knowledge with students' existing knowledge structures" (Bunce, Vandenplas, & Havanki, 2006, p.493) and therefore being a means by which individuals can understand their experiences (Kilgore, Sattler, & Turns, 2013, p.811). Indeed, Illeris (2007, p.254) considers reflection to be a specific form of accommodation. Therefore, if a student does not continue on to reflect on learning activities, opportunities to develop new perspectives are lost. By ensuring that reflection is presented to students as an integral part of their learning they are less likely to ignore it, more likely to see it as important, and therefore more likely to take full advantage of the learning opportunities. As Barmeyer (2004, p.580) explains, the way in which we process our experiences is central to learning and critical reflection is paramount.

5.3.4 Non-Learning

Having discussed different types of learning that take place it is also important to provide a specific mention of non-learning which both Illeris and Jarvis discuss in detail and which has already been mentioned in discussion of the learning dimensions. Illeris (2007, p.157) emphasises the importance of considering why learning does not occur in contexts where it is promoted and explains that the causes of non-learning can relate to more than one dimension simultaneously.

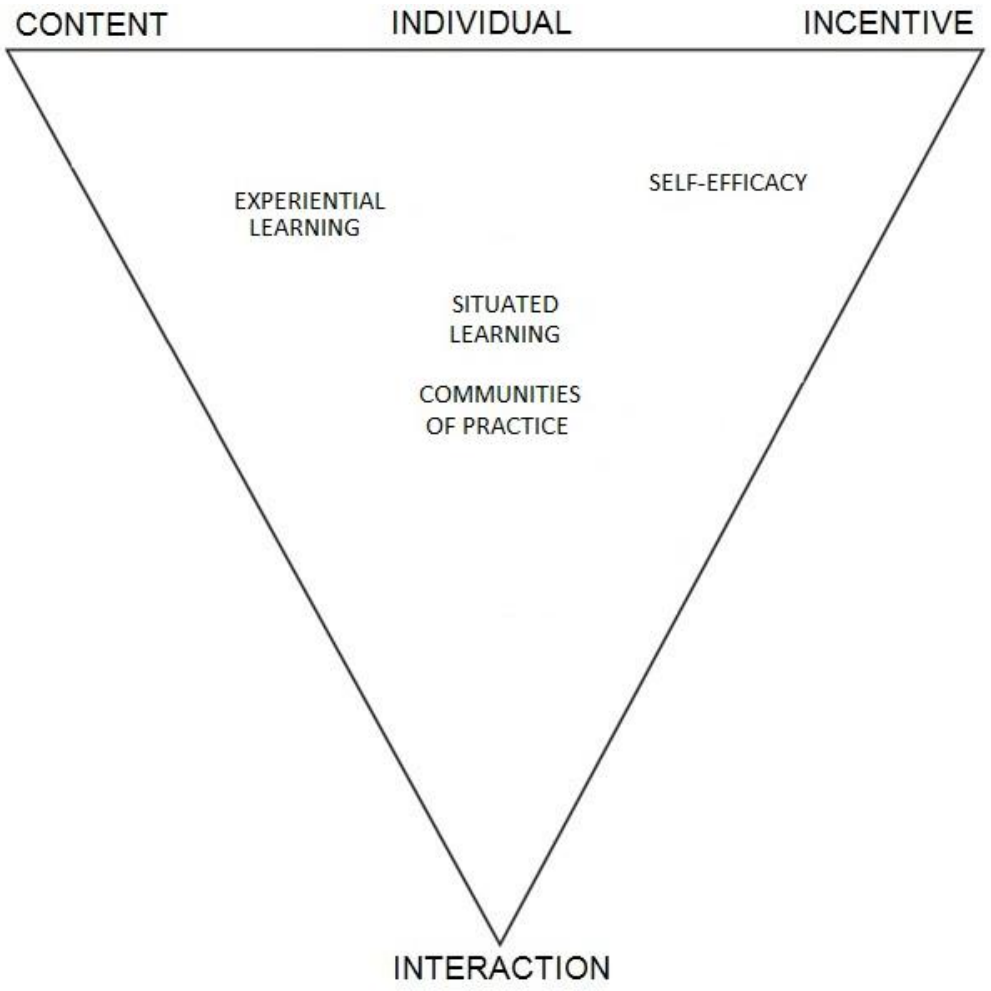
Non-learning is important in the current context since it is those individuals who experience PSA who are often least prepared to learn how to present. Important concepts relating to non-learning which have already been discussed include self-efficacy and motivation. In addition, of particular relevance is "defence against learning" which Illeris (2007, p.160) explains as being connected to the incentive dimension and occurs because the individual can find the learning experience "threatening, limiting or in some other way places a strain on maintaining mental balance" (Illeris, 2007, p.160). Illeris (2007, p.161) explains that overcoming the defence against learning "is often the most decisive factor for achieving a progressive learning". This would seem to be particularly relevant to the context of students being unable to make progress in the development of oral presentations because of the strong aversion they feel to such situations. Indeed, given the individual differences that exist in any given group then the learning that takes place is enhanced by pedagogic interventions which enable individuals to lower barriers to learning which may exist and take advantage of the opportunities presented in the activities.

5.4 Framework

Taking Illeris's three dimensional framework as a space in which learning theories can be mapped it would seem that situated learning and experiential learning do not just overlap but occupy a large expanse of the central territory. In fact, Jarvis (2004, p.37) suggests the approaches should be combined. The resulting framework (see Figure 5.6),

therefore uses Illeris's model and occupies the centre by promoting a classroom based largely on both situated and experiential learning which are close to the centre of Illeris's model. It also recognises that at times the learning may be primarily based on just one of these theories or even focussed away from them but it is often the case that the influence of either experiential learning or situated learning will be present. Therefore, while Figure 5.6 shows learning theory which underpins the approach adopted in this study, other learning is not precluded. Indeed, "Adults learn in many ways, in many contexts and for many reasons" (Schell and Haslett, 2007, p.113) and "there is no single learning theory that can fully explain all types of learning" (Kahiigi, Ekenberg, Hansson, Tusubira, & Danielson, 2008, p.79). Furthermore, Wenger (1998, p.3) points out that a variety of learning theories exist which serve to explain different facets of learning. However, the approach which is taken in the current context draws on the view that HE needs to ensure that it is adequately preparing students for graduate roles with the broad aim being to design a learning environment which fulfils Knight and Yorke's (2003, p.14) suggestion of designing "programmes and learning environments that combine a concern for good learning with the development of student employability".

Figure 5.6 A Framework of Learning in the Current Context



Source: adapted from Illeris (2007)

5.5 Application of Learning Theory

Having established a framework which, based on Illeris's three dimensional model, allows for an approach underpinned by multiple theories, the pedagogical strategies which are used in the approach and which are underpinned by the theories are now discussed. The dominant pedagogies of the approach taken are PBL and CSP. However, consideration is given first to the debate over whether such skills should be developed as part of the discipline in the first place or should be developed separately.

5.5.1 Embedding Skills within the Discipline

The approach developed in this context is firmly rooted in the belief that the development of skills, such as communication skills, is best achieved within the discipline rather than separately as part of "a bolt-on approach … divorced from subject knowledge" (Wingate, 2006, p.467). This is supported in the context of public speaking by Knight, Johnson and Stewart (2016, p.44) who argue that oral presentation practice "needs to be embedded in the course" and that generally students do not seek support independently. Furthermore, students often view courses offered outside of the core discipline as irrelevant to their subject and as a result, students may consider such classes as low priority (Wingate, 2006, p.458).

5.5.2 Problem-Based Learning

PBL is an approach which is underpinned by situated learning (Coldwell, 2003; Hong, Lai, & Holton, 2003; Luzón, 2006; Oliver, 2002) and has been viewed as its classroom-based equivalent (Hassall & Joyce, 2014, p.387). Despite the close association with situated learning, PBL was originally conceived in the field of medical education, developing from a perspective of holism with regard to learning theory (Savin-Badin & Major 2004, p.34). In addition to its association with situated learning, PBL is also associated with experiential learning, particularly given that fostering reflection is a basic reason for using PBL (Rué, Font, & Cebrián, 2013, p.200), and the development of self-efficacy (Duncan & Schulz, 2015). Since self-efficacy is more effectively increased through real experience when compared with vicarious experience, PBL may be an effective approach (Albion, 1999). This connection is supported by Jungert and Rosander (2010, p.657) who report "that elements in PBL may provide students with more sources of efficacy information that can increase academic self-efficacy."

PBL is seen as a means for classroom learning to "properly reflect the real world of work" (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2003, p.135). Thus, in a classroom built on PBL "scenarios relating to real life are used as a point of departure for the learning process" (Dahlgren &

Öberg, 2001, p.263) with the use of learning related to the profession as a focal point (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2003, p.135) and an emphasis on "goal-directed activity situated in circumstances that are authentic in terms of intended application of the learnt knowledge" (Hong, Lai, & Holton, 2003). Furthermore, since the scenarios used in PBL try to mirror reality, they "can offer students opportunities to engage with complexity … and learn to manage the ambiguities that prevail in professional life" (Savin-Baden, 2000, p.1). The position of any discipline specific content in such an approach is determined by its relevance to the scenario (Illeris, 2007, p.244).

In PBL it is typical, though not essential, for students to "work collaboratively in small groups or teams to clarify and define the nature of the problem and how they can deal with it" (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2003, p.135-136). Furthermore, the role of the lecturer changes so that rather than adopting the traditional role of the "all-knowing sage" (Savin-Badin & Major 2004, p.81), the tutor takes on a supporting role in which they "may be a facilitator rather than an expert in the field" (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2003, p.136).

This approach, as mentioned above, has its origins in the field of medicine (Barab & Duffy, 2000, p.30; Savin-Badin & Major 2004, p.34) but while it has also been used extensively in disciplines such as nursing and engineering, it does not appear to have been used widely in accounting education (Stanley & Marsden, 2012). Despite this, Wilkin and Collier (2009) claim that PBL can be applied successfully in accounting education with the development of "communication skills, problem solving and teamwork" being particular benefits derived from its use (Soares, Casa Nova, & Bulaon, 2014, p.16). Indeed, given that "Accountancy education was originally established as a workplace activity" and evolved into a subject studied at university (Hassall & Joyce, 2014, p.394) then an approach influenced by PBL would seem appropriate. Furthermore, van Ginkel et al. (2015) suggest that an important principle of task design is that students should "perceive the context of the task as 'authentic' to enhance self-efficacy beliefs, oral presentation competence and to decrease communication apprehension"

(p.70). This principle further supports the notion that an approach to oral presentation development can be adopted which also addresses PSA and that such an approach can, at least in part, be based on PBL.

5.5.3 Contributing Student Pedagogy

CSP is an approach to classroom learning supported by the notion that learning occurs in communities of practice (Cajander, Daniels, & McDermott, 2012; Hamer et al., 2011; Singh, 2015). It is "[a] pedagogy that requires students to produce artifacts for the purpose of contributing to other students' learning, and encourages students to value these peer contributions" (Hamer et al., 2011, p.81). It is common for educational theories to develop from a particular context or discipline and then undergo development in relative isolation (Dennick, 2014, p.39). This appears to be the case with CSP which has been used widely in the area of computer education but with only a few examples of application in other disciplines (Hamer et al., 2008, p.201). CSP does not have a long history with the term first being used by Collis and Moonen (2005) (Hamer, Sheard, Purchase, & Luxton-Reilly, 2012). The emphasis in CSP is firmly on "the process of learning by engaging students as co-creators of learning resources" (Hamer et al., 2012). Given that the approach adopted in the intervention which is the focus of this study attempts to promote environments in which students are learning from their peers then the concept of CSP would seem relevant. As part of the course the students engage in activities which require them to read and observe the work of other students and in return conduct formative assessment of this work. By taking such an approach students are encouraged to become more active learners and take more responsibility for learning (Luxton-Reilly & Denny, 2010, p.148). Furthermore, by encouraging the students to take on more responsibility, the relationship of the instructor and student in the classroom changes so that the instructor becomes the facilitator of learning rather than the imparter of knowledge and does not exercise the traditional level of power (Hamer et al., 2008). By taking on greater responsibility and practising higher order skills of

assessment the students adopt roles closer to those they might expect to fulfil when they have graduated. Hamer et al. (2008) provide a number of practical examples of how CSP might appear in the classroom. One of these examples mirrors the approach adopted in the module under consideration.

> Students' oral presentations are assessed by other students using a given list of criteria which are then passed to the presenter as feedback, allowing them to improve their presentation skills. Not only does this develop students' critical skills, it ensures that students pay attention to their peers. The instructor assesses the feedback sheets provided by each student as part of the summative assessment, thereby encouraging the assessors to take their task seriously (Hamer et al., 2008, p.195).

The process described by Hamer et al. (2008) is consistent with the oral presentation activities which take place in the module; students observe their peers delivering oral presentations and immediately after they write feedback which along with feedback from other peers and the tutors is returned to the presenters within 48 hours. The emphasis on peer observation is supported by Adams (2004) who found that the benefits to the observer when observing individuals with similar novice characteristics outweighed any benefits from observing experts. Furthermore, van Ginkel et al. (2015) emphasise how the use of peer observation supports the development of self-efficacy which, as well as supporting learning in the incentive dimension, helps learning in the content dimension with the learning of presentation skills.

Having discussed the supporting theories and pedagogies, the specific activities which they underpin are now discussed.

5.6 Applying the Framework to the AIO Classroom

The approach adopted in the current study recognises that individual students bring with them a wide range of experiences and conceptions of speaking to audiences. This means

that in any given activity it is possible for a variety of learning and non-learning to occur. With this in mind, the focus of the discussion that follows is on how the theory and pedagogy that have already been discussed underpin the activities with the aim of providing the widest opportunities for learning to take place.

The module centres on a fictitious company called GRADCO Ltd which is run by the tutors. The students are asked to apply for work placements in the company; all subsequently secure positions and are then presented with a series of team projects over the course of the academic year. The projects help the students to develop skills and competencies which are sought after by graduate employers and are based on a list of 'employability competencies' identified by Rees, Forbes and Kubler (2007). Three of these projects require presentations to be prepared and delivered to an audience of peers and tutors. On each occasion the tutors act as the intended audience while the other students in the room are observers for the first and second presentations and the audience for the third. The projects are intended to simulate the type of project that might occur in the real world. In the first project, which takes place in October, the groups must advise a fictitious local authority on the best use of a publicly owned plot of land. The task is open ended with no particular right or wrong solution. The students are simply required to prepare advice based on their research and present to the tutor, who takes on the role of council leader. The duration is six minutes which amounts to just over a minute for a group of five students. The presentation is essentially a formative exercise but carries a small amount of credit in order to encourage participation. After some further projects which help develop other skills, the second presentation takes place at the end of January. For this the groups have to prepare advice to an entrepreneur, concerning the pricing and marketing of a product. This project requires the groups to present profit forecasts and so is technically more challenging, is not open ended and requires the groups to field some questions from the tutor who takes on the role of the entrepreneur. This project is again designed to be formative but also carries a small summative element to provide an incentive for participation. The final presentation

project takes place just before the Easter holiday and carries a high weighting towards the module grade. For this presentation the groups prepare an economic/business briefing on agreed topics of current relevance. This means that they must draw on concepts they have learned from the course and apply them to an important issue of the day. For these final presentations the whole class and the tutor act as the audience since the presentations should form learning content for the peers in the audience. This brief outline demonstrates the use of oral presentations in the module that this is based on PBL and draws on situated learning in its attempts to present scenarios which imitate the real world. The module is run by two tutors; one is a subject tutor while the other is an Academic Skills Tutor (AST). This addresses the unease expressed by St Pierre and Rebele (2014) concerning the suitability of subject tutors in supporting skills development. Indeed, Zaremba (2012, p.10) emphasises the importance of ensuring that tuition in this area is supported by those who have studied communication.

In each of the projects involving oral presentations, the students first form groups of four or five and then conduct the work which culminates in the delivery of the presentations. This includes research into the topic, decision making and planning of the presentation. This emphasises the underpinning of the approach through PBL. As part of the preparation process the students are encouraged to practise the presentations either on their own, with peers or with an AST. By working in groups to prepare and practising the students may improve self-efficacy since this can be improved through the honing of the presentation, the experience of delivering the presentation successfully and also through having to communicate with each other in their groups. This may be especially important for those who have trait-like OCA that extends to more contexts than public speaking.

The parameters of the presentations that the students deliver are constructed so that the three presentations become progressively more challenging. This adheres to the learning task design principle of van Ginkel, et al. (2015, p.70), the suggestion by Arquero, Fernández-Polvillo, Michel-Vázquez and Ramírez Meda (2016) that task design

should ensure the gradual raising of the difficulty and is an approach which both Turk (1985) and Roberts (2017) promote. The idea is that since adrenalin is produced in response to the anticipated situation, when the body realises that there is actually nothing to fear the reaction is subsequently reduced (Turk, 1985, p.112). The "process of learned response is quite involuntary, and cannot be changed once learnt" (Turk, 1985, p.112). Turk (1985, p.112) likens it to the initial fear of driving a car which eventually subsides and cannot be relearned. This approach therefore also supports the development of self-efficacy.

The experience of the first presentation is designed to be as non-threatening as possible; short in duration; open-ended with no right or wrong answer; no questioning from the audience and having feedback focussed on what the presenter has done well. This is designed to ensure as far as possible that students see their presentation as a success and so can take the experience into account as they move on to the next project.

The presentations are delivered to both tutors and peers but with the peers out of sight of the presenters during the first and second presentations. This means that during presentation weeks the students observe three to four peer presentations which adheres to van Ginkel et al.'s (2015) principle of "Behavioural modelling" (p.70). As part of the observation the students provide feedback using grading criteria and comments anonymously. The feedback is returned to the presenters promptly. This aspect of the presentation activities is underpinned by CSP as it mirrors exactly the example provided earlier from Hamer et al. (2008) and also complies with the design principles of feedback and peer assessment suggested by van Ginkel et al. (2015). Furthermore, this aspect of the projects also supports the development of self-efficacy through vicarious experience of observation and the verbal persuasion, albeit in written form, of the feedback received.

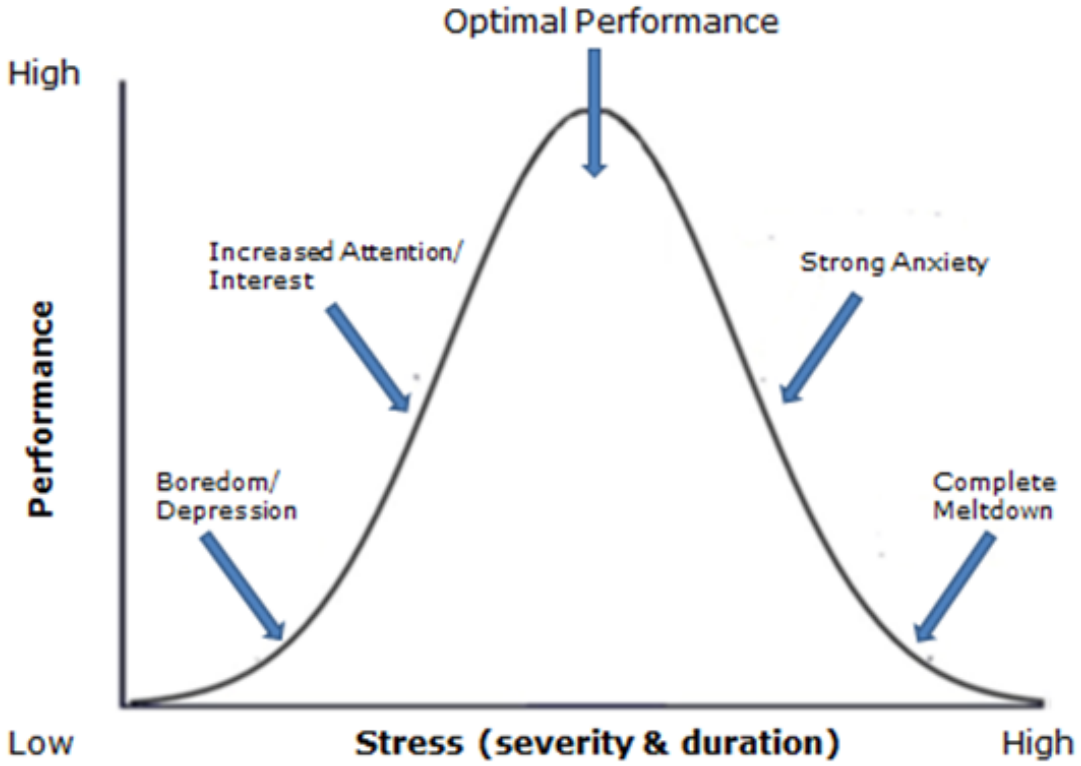
For each presentation the students complete a structured reflection using all the evidence available. This allows them to think about the event and consider how they might improve for the next project. They specifically focus on the outcomes of the

project and the reason for the outcomes, how they felt during the project, what they felt they learned from the activity and finally what they would do in similar situations in the future. This aspect of the activities is supported by experiential learning but is also relevant to the development of self-efficacy since emotional arousal may be activated as the students write about how they felt and also think of the causes for particular outcomes.

Finally, as part of the students' preparation for the course they complete a series of competency and skills self-assessments which contribute to their 'Baseline Assessment'. These include questions which relate to oral presentations of which one is McCroskey's PRCA-24 questionnaire. Students indicating high PSA in the self-assessments are invited for a one-to-one appointment to discuss their apprehension with the aim of identifying the main sources of the apprehension and considering how they might reduce it. This approach is also underpinned by self-efficacy. In most cases the students are reminded of the sources of self-efficacy and a discussion takes place which centres on verbal persuasion and emotional arousal. This discussion is based on many of the areas typically reported as sources of apprehension for those needing to present to an audience and what they might do to overcome the apprehension. One example drawing on verbal persuasion concerns perceptions that individuals have of speaking to audiences, particularly focussing on the performance-communication continuum discussed by Motley (1997). If students experiencing PSA demonstrate that they have a performance orientation, Motley (1997, p.43) suggests that this is likely to be the case, then the discussion focusses on encouraging them to think of the presentation as a communication event. Discussion is likely to centre on misperceptions of presentations and audiences that anxious students typically hold. It is often the case that anxious speakers feel they are being judged by the audience when the audience is listening to the message (Motley, 1997, p.45). For example, anxious speakers often believe they are being judged on how flawlessly they deliver the presentation which often results in students preparing scripted or memorised speeches (Motley, 1997, p.45). Therefore,

discussion might focus on the reasons why scripted presentations are not generally a good idea (see Schmitt, 1997) as well as emphasising that such an approach is likely to increase anxiety (Motley, 1997, p.45). Furthermore, performance oriented speakers often become flustered because the objective they have is to survive the performance which means they are not focussed on what they are trying to communicate (Motley, 1997, p.58). Another related point concerns the mistake of thinking that there should be no hesitation in a presentation (Turk, 1985, p.106). In fact, audiences do not see hesitation as a sign of nervousness and while speech without too many pauses is preferable, a speech devoid of pauses or hesitation "would sound unnatural" (Turk, 1985, p.107). A further point which is discussed with individuals in the one-to-one sessions is that a certain level of apprehension with regard to the delivery of oral presentations is not only normal (Rawlins, 1993, p.67) but is also desirable (van Emden & Becker, 2004, p.29). This follows Yerkes-Dodson Law which holds that a certain level of stress results in optimal performance with low levels of stress and high levels of stress both resulting in low quality performance (Yerkes-Dodson, 1908) and is illustrated by Bradberry (2014) (see Figure 5.7). In his illustration Bradberry (2014) characterises low stress with low quality performance resulting in "boredom" and high stress with low performance resulting in "complete meltdown". In the middle is the optimal level of performance (high) produced by levels of stress between low and high.

Figure 5.7 Level of Task Performance and Level of Stress



Source: Bradberry (2014)

By discussing Yerkes-Dodson Law and using Bradberry's illustration the aim is to reassure the students that they should not be trying to eliminate nerves, but be aiming to use the nerves positively. A feeling of nervousness is normal in public speaking and is a demonstration that the presenter cares about the presentation (Rawlins, 1993, p.67). Indeed, van Emden and Becker (2004, p.29) claim that the "most important message about nerves is that they are a good thing". They are advantageous because they help with adrenalin (Rawlins, 1993, p67; van Emden & Becker, 2004, p.29). This helps presenters portray a sense of excitement which helps engage the audience (van Emden & Becker, 2004, p.30) and provide the presenter with extra energy (Rawlins, 1993, p67). Furthermore, even "the calmest speakers will experience at least a few mild symptoms of anxiety" (Motley, 1997, p.25). So, presenters should "be nervous, but not overcome by nerves" (van Emden & Becker, 2004, p.30) and it should be considered a mistake to aim to achieve zero anxiety as "at some point symptoms do appear as it is practically inevitable even with relaxed speakers" (Motley, 1997, p.25). Indeed, even

calm and experienced speakers experience what is known as a "Confrontation Reaction"; a surge of anxiety commonly experienced at the start of a speech. Therefore, the aim is not that symptoms of anxiety should be eliminated but that they should be reduced to a level that is both short and comfortable (Motley, 1997, p.31).

By discussing these issues, there is not only the potential of reducing the apprehension felt by those experiencing high levels, but it may also improve the quality of the presentations they deliver. The discussion has the potential to completely change the way that individuals think about presentations depending upon the prior beliefs held on the topic. It is therefore underpinned by constructivism; some students will not have developed many ideas about what constitutes a good presentation and therefore are likely to adopt the ideas without resistance; assimilating the new knowledge. On the other hand, students with prior experiences which have resulted in a performance orientation are likely to need more persuasion in order to adopt the perception of the oral presentation as a communication event. In such cases, needing to change their beliefs concerning presentations, the students will at least be experiencing accommodation. This reiterates the notion that student learning in the group is likely to be underpinned by a variety of learning theories and therefore supports the adoption of Illeris's general framework.

Discussion in the one-to-one sessions may also consider emotional arousal by, for example, discussing how students feel before presentations, how they can attempt to overcome any negative feelings and how they might attempt to manage nerves as they prepare to present.

Much of the discussion focusses on aspects of the approach taken in the module which take place through group projects or through student interactions during projects. The PBL and CSP approaches need to be supplemented by one-to-one meetings, particularly with those exhibiting PSA. In doing this, the aim is to cater for the variety of needs amongst the students and support the use of Illeris's model as a general framework for how this module is designed. The model therefore supports the likely complexity of

learning which takes place in the module. Furthermore, it supports the notion that an approach which both develops presentation skills and helps reduce PSA is achievable.

5.7 Conclusion

As has been illustrated in the discussion to this point, the evidence indicating the sources of apprehension in the context of oral presentations are varied and at times contradictory. As Finn (2007, pp.114-115) points out, the impact that variables have on individuals can be unpredictable. The range of variables is extensive and as a result the range of possible solutions is both broad and with uncertain outcomes. This chapter has provided a theoretical underpinning for the intervention which is the focus on this study. It argues that by providing an intervention which recognises that learning occurs in three dimensions and ensuring that the, often neglected, incentive dimension is recognised then skills and confidence in oral presentations can develop. By incorporating a focus on the incentive dimension, the intervention places particular attention to the development of self-efficacy towards speaking to audiences by incorporating activities designed to raise levels, particularly amongst the most highly apprehensive students but also across the cohort as a whole. The study therefore seeks to determine which aspects of the intervention, if any, on balance seem to contribute to reducing apprehensive students' levels of apprehension towards delivering oral presentations.

Chapter 6: Methodology and Design of the Study

6.1 Introduction

This study investigates an intervention designed to help develop the oral communication skills of undergraduate accounting students during the first year of study at university. Specifically, it focusses on those students who express apprehension at the prospect of delivering oral presentations and looks at the degree to which the apprehension they feel changes over the seven months of the intervention. In addition, it identifies factors which might determine levels of apprehension felt by students towards oral presentations and features of the intervention which might contribute to any progress they make in developing skills and reducing their apprehension. Finally, the study aims to contribute to the development of a theoretical framework for a classroom intervention aimed at the reduction of PSA and development of oral presentation skills.

OCA and specifically the public speaking subset PSA have been studied extensively and strong evidence has been found which supports the notion that those studying accountancy are more likely to exhibit PSA when compared with their peers studying many other disciplines. However, despite the plethora of studies, investigations have rarely considered how educational programmes might help develop student oral communication skills and also reduce apprehension as part of the same intervention. Furthermore, as Byrne et al. (2012, p.577) have pointed out, much of the previous research has "been solely quantitative in orientation". As a result, a deeper understanding of the experiences of apprehensive students, of the causes of their apprehension, their feelings when preparing for and delivering presentations, how they manage to develop their skills and confidence in presenting and what they feel about classroom approaches is rare. In fact, Byrne et al. (2012) could not identify research which addressed this area and concluded "that no prior research with business and accounting students has explored the phenomenon of OCA using qualitative methods.

Indeed, there is an absence of qualitative research of the topic with students in all disciplines." (p.567). Given the paucity of such research in this area and the undoubted need for studies which seek to investigate the experiences of students who encounter PSA, the current study is designed to investigate the experiences of students studying a module which attempts to develop students' skills and confidence in oral communication, particularly when presenting to audiences.

In spite of the call for research into educational practices which attempt to develop presentation skills and reduce the apprehension felt by students, there is not universal agreement that such research is worthwhile with the value of educational research having long been doubted (St Pierre, 2006, p.240) and a lack of trust towards educational research widely held (Lagemann, 2000, p.x). Such scepticism was particularly prominent in Britain during the late 1990s, being reinforced by Hargreaves (2007) who in 1996 concluded that educational research was generally of poor quality and did not represent good value. Similarly, Tooley and Darby (1998) were critical when they analysed a sample of educational research, concluding that much of it was partisan in nature, that there were various methodological issues and that much of the research lacked relevance. Finally, Hillage, Pearson, Anderson and Tamkin (1998) concluded that educational research was having insufficient influence on practice and that research that had been applied to practice tended to be small with unreliable results that could not be generalised. They claimed many studies were not sufficiently grounded in "existing knowledge" and as a result not useful for improving understanding, were "largely inaccessible to a non-academic audience" and lacked sufficient "interpretation for a policy-making or practitioner audience" (Hillage et al., 1998, p.xi).

Wellington (2015, p.307) argues that the criticism towards educational research promoted in the late 1990s by these authors continues to be "near the political and social surface." So, Crane's (2013, p.39) claim that educational research can be problematic continues to have resonance. However, such research which requires human participants can be complex due to greater ethical demands when compared with other

disciplines such as the physical sciences (Wellington, 2015, p.4) and the greater number of variables involved (Crane, 2013, p.39). In addition, Wellington (2015, p.323) concludes that educational research should not be expected to be conclusive but should provide a window on practices and relationships between factors. If, in turn, practitioners can build rigorous research based on "primary and secondary research, the trustworthiness of the research is increased" (Crane, 2013, p.40). Also, educational research should not be assessed by unsuitable criteria. Burton and Bartlett (2009, pp.6-7) note that Hargreaves (2007), Tooley and Darby (1998) and Hillage et al. (1998) have been criticised for adopting evaluation frameworks which were unsuitable for much of the research they were evaluating.

It is therefore clear that "the veracity of different research approaches" is a disputed area in education (Scott, 2000, p.11). However, a universal agreement as to what constitutes good educational research would involve "the ruthless elimination of methodological diversity and the imposition of a single view of what is to count as valid educational research" (Carr, 2000, p.446). The resulting "imposed consensus" would suppress a large part of the research community (Carr, 2000, p.446). For example, much educational research is underpinned by interpretivism and therefore rather than provide global solutions, focusses on what can be discovered with regard to the range of possibilities that exist (Hammersley, 2002). The specific "philosophical and theoretical positions" taken by the researcher will determine the methods they are likely to adopt as well as the aims of the study (Kohli & Burbules, 2012, p.vii). Hence, the research will depend on the beliefs of the researcher about what it is possible for us to research, what is worth researching and how we can conduct research. This chapter therefore aims to clarify these positions as they relate to the current study before elaborating on the detail of the research design. However, since this research follows Byrne et al.'s (2012) call to focus closely on the experience of those experiencing high apprehension it is likely to fall into the category of research unsuitable for evaluation by the criteria promoted by Hargreaves (2007), Tooley and Darby (1998) and Hillage et al. (1998). It does not seek

to promote general solutions but to support what Pring (2000, p.140) calls the growth of professional knowledge. In doing this, professionals can read research which takes place in a given context and judge for themselves the extent to which it might inform contexts in which they work.

This chapter will firstly consider the philosophical underpinning of the approach adopted which has critical realist sensibilities but which also draws on support from pragmatism. It then discusses the methodology used in this study, which can be described as a mixed methods case study. This then leads to a discussion of the specific design of the study. Following this, the tools employed in the study and their implementation are discussed. The chapter then moves on to consider a number of ethical issues related to the study before finally highlighting some of its limitations.

6.2 Research Approach

The research conducted for this thesis adopts an approach principally underpinned by critical realism which, while using mixed methods, relies on qualitative data collection for the greater part (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010, p.155). Critical realism, a perspective originally developed by researchers such as Bhaskar and Archer (Sayer, 2000, 2004; McKenna, 2014), grew out of discontent with the "various forms of empiricism and idealism" that had become popular (Isaac, 1990, p.2) and which resulted in the 'paradigm wars' producing a "sense of paradigm incompatibility" (Bryman, 2008, p.15). Critical realism provided one solution to this by offering its own ontological and epistemological assumptions and "has emerged as a viable philosophical paradigm for conducting social science research" (Wynn & Williams, 2008, p.2).

In introducing critical realism Bhaskar (2008, p.1) argues for an alternative account of realism to that provided by positivism. He argues that reality and our experience of events often do not coincide (Bhaskar, 2008, p.2). In order to illustrate this Bhaskar

(2008, p.2) divides reality into three domains namely the real, the actual and the empirical (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Bhaskar's Three Domains of Reality

	Domain of		
	Real	Actual	Empirical
Mechanisms	✓		
Events	✓	✓	
Experiences	✓	✓	✓

Source: Bhaskar (2008, p.2)

In critical realism the real refers to that which actually exists but its existence may be independent of our knowledge (Sayer, 2000). At this level is the realm of mechanisms; "the intransitive objects or structures, which may exert their causal power independent of human intervention" (Bansilal, 2010, p.80). The next level is the actual; a subsection of the real which contains the "events that occur when the causal powers of structures and entities are enacted" (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p.790). These events may or may not be observable (Brown, 2007, p.66). The empirical is a subsection of the actual and contains the events which are experienced by the individual and therefore can yield data (Wynn & Williams, 2012). Critical realism adopts an "open system perspective" (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p.792) accepting that the contextual conditions are rarely constant and due to "typically fluid and permeable" boundaries the aim is to identify tendencies in particular contexts (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p.792) while accepting that we "can only ever achieve a partial understanding of the world" (Jones-Devitt & Smith, 2007, p.108). So critical realism holds that while an objective reality exists, the best the researcher can hope for is an improved interpretation of reality (Cruickshank, 2003, pp.1-2). This conceptualisation of critical realism therefore supports the claim that there is an "intransitive or ontological dimension" (Al-Amoudi & Willmott, 2011, p.29) and a

transitive epistemological dimension (Hedlund, 2015). The critical realist intransitive dimension holds "that there is a world that exists independent of our knowledge of it" (Montano & Szmigin, 2005, p.365). Furthermore, it holds that the world is complex and our experience of it can only ever be incomplete (Wynn & Williams, 2012). As a result, critical realists also hold that there is a transitive dimension which is always open to revision (Wynn & Williams, 2012). These constitute "our beliefs, theories and concepts about the entities that constitute reality" and are "ontologically real, yet distinct from the entities themselves" (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p.790). This constitutes the empirical domain.

While the ontology of critical realism is realist, the epistemological position of critical realism is relativist or constructivist. This is claimed since despite the recognition of a reality independent of our knowledge, critical realists accept that any perceptions of reality may not coincide with reality and that our interpretations and perceptions of reality are shaped by the social contexts in which we live (Gabriel, 2012, p.148). This view of what we can know supports the epistemological relativism of critical realism which results in its labelling as the transitive dimension (Steinmetz & Chae, 2002, p.121). The implications of this are that despite the critical realist view of reality, individuals may have different empirical interpretations of events in the actual domain and that in order for understanding to be developed, further evidence is likely to be necessary so that alternative explanations can be distinguished (Easton, 2010, p.123). So while critical realists reject the existence of multiple realities, they accept the notion that individuals may have different views of reality and that these can be accepted as real; they form part of a world of which we seek to make sense (Maxwell, 2012). Furthermore, given the open system in which critical realism operates the aim is to seek explanations for phenomena rather than make predictions (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p.793).

In the current study evidence is sought from research participants on specific occasions using different research tools. This provides varied lenses through which to gain the

empirical evidence to afford different insights into the area being researched. An approach which captures diverse perspectives is seen by Snape and Spencer (2003, p.19) as adding "richness to our understanding of the various ways in which that reality has been experienced" and allows for the capture of different understandings that individuals hold concerning events (Easby, 2010, p.63).

A further consideration which is important in the critical realist paradigm concerns the role of the researcher. In a critical realist approach the researcher is part of the research (Maxwell, 2002, p20). The researcher's role, according to Maxwell (2002, p.20) has two features. On the one hand, they focus on what the researcher brings to the research in terms of their life experience which influences their role as a researcher. On the other hand, the researcher has a relationship with the research participants, which needs to be acknowledged. Maxwell (2002, p.21) emphasises the role of the researcher in their own research when he cautions that "to exclude subjective and personal concerns is not only impossible in practice, but is actually harmful to good research". These points are particularly relevant in a context such as the current one in which the teacher-researcher is part of their own research and must acknowledge that the very decision to conduct research makes the context and therefore the intervention different when compared to the setting had research not been conducted. Furthermore, as research is conducted over time, evidence collected early in the research process may influence practice during subsequent stages of the research.

Despite, the approach adopted in the current study being underpinned by critical realism, pragmatism also supports the approach taken. A pragmatic stance to research moves away from the focus on research paradigms and places the suitability of methods in addressing a particular research question or problem as the main consideration (Coe, 2012, p.8). A stance which is underpinned by both critical realism and pragmatic consideration is both possible and "more powerful" than would otherwise be the case (Proctor, 1998, p.354). Indeed, critical realism can be classed as pragmatic since it accepts approaches to research which "have shown some ability to increase our

understanding of the world" (Maxwell, 2012, p.10). Important considerations in the current study are the demands put on the students by conducting the research and unnecessary duplication of activities. By using activities already in place as part of the intervention these concerns are addressed and the impact of research being conducted is reduced.

6.3 Methodology

While critical realism provides the main underpinning of the study, the specific research methodology employed can best be described as case study. Case study research is often recommended as a specific research methodology which is suited to a critical realist approach (Perry, 1998, p.791; Wynn & Williams, 2012, p.795). This research methodology fits well with a critical realist approach since it derives from a "desire to understand complex social phenomena" (Yin, 2014, p.4). It "investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2014, p.16). Stake (2005) places prominence on the case study being concerned with choices about what the researcher is to study rather than being a methodology. In making this assertion Stake (2005) emphasises the importance of the case study in helping to understand "the case rather than generalize beyond it" (p.443). Easton's definition of what constitutes case study research captures much of the approach taken in the current study; "a research method that involves investigating one or a small number of social entities or situations about which data are collected using multiple sources of data and developing a holistic description through an iterative research process" (Easton, 2010, p.119). This definition emphasises research using multiple sources of data over time; the current study draws on data from across five cohorts of students. However, Yin's (2014) explanation captures the nature of the current study in that it focusses on a classroom intervention but with most attention on those who report experiencing PSA. This draws on activities which the students carry out as part of the module thus ensuring that the research is conducted as close to the real life context as possible.

A further aspect of case study research concerns the potentially 'messy' nature of the research (Scapens, 2004, p.263). While a clear set of research questions and theoretical framework are desirable, case study research may have restrictions with regard to the accessibility within the case and may need modification over time as unanticipated issues emerge (Scapens, 2004, p.263). This means that as the case evolves it may need to adapt to changing circumstances.

A critical realist approach to research affords qualitative research a "prominent place" so that it supplements quantitative research (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010, p.155). As noted by Byrne et al. (2012), research into OCA has a long tradition of taking a positivistic approach, confirming the higher levels of apprehension generally felt by accounting students towards communication and particularly communication in public speaking contexts when compared with peers studying other disciplines. The current study does not reject the approach taken in previous research but seeks to build on this evidence by repeating the widely used Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) questionnaire (see Appendix 3) to confirm levels of PSA and then by monitoring progress and exploring the reflections of participants exhibiting PSA as they undertake their studies. By investigating beyond the quantitative evidence provided by the PRCA-24 questionnaire and researching the experiences of the students facing PSA, greater meaning can be afforded to the findings. Furthermore, a critical realist perspective "treats both individuals' perspectives and their situations as real phenomena that causally interact with one another" (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010, p.157). This allows for research to uncover the potentially varied causes of PSA and establish what aspects of the intervention may help students overcome this apprehension.

This approach has axiological warrant as it responds to calls for research to investigate this topic more deeply than has been the case previously. "So many prior studies on OCA have been solely quantitative in orientation and the lived experiences of CA have been absent. It is only by reading students' own words that the reality of the apprehension is

effectively conveyed." (Byrne et al., 2012, p.577). Furthermore, the approach taken reports on an intervention that has had some success in developing presentation skills and reducing apprehension which, following the advice of Hassall et al. (2013a, p.174), would warrant being the subject of research as this may contribute to the establishment of "good practice".

Illeris's framework which underpins the approach being investigated incorporates numerous theories of learning which, as has been mentioned previously, may underpin learning. Given the potential complexity of the context in which students bring different experiences to the learning environment, a case study approach underpinned by critical realism seems most likely to provide the insights sought into changes which occur during the intervention, factors influential in determining PSA amongst the students, features of the intervention which support the development of presentation skills for the most apprehensive students and how far the framework can contribute to the aim of simultaneously developing presentation skills and reducing PSA.

Concern is often raised about reliability and validity in case study research (Riege, 2003, p.75; Wellington, 2015, p.175). However, an advantage of case study research is that it enables the collection of data through a range of methods (Wellington, 2015, p.168). This means that both methodological and data triangulation are possible (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p.111) which has the potential to enhance reliability (Basit, 2010, p.71) and validity (Dul & Hak, 2007, p.xvii) in case study research by providing multiple perspectives.

Despite the arguments presented to support the use of mixed methods, the combining of approaches in mixed methods research is an area which is highly contested (Greene, 2008, p.10) and controversial (David & Sutton, 2011, p.294). Indeed, the very nature of any framework for mixed methods research is disputed (Feilzer, 2010, p.7) and is complicated by competing models (Greene, 2008, p.12). However, most importantly, the emphasis of mixed methods research is on understanding a research problem (David & Sutton, 2011, p.294). It recognises the complexity of social phenomena and assumes

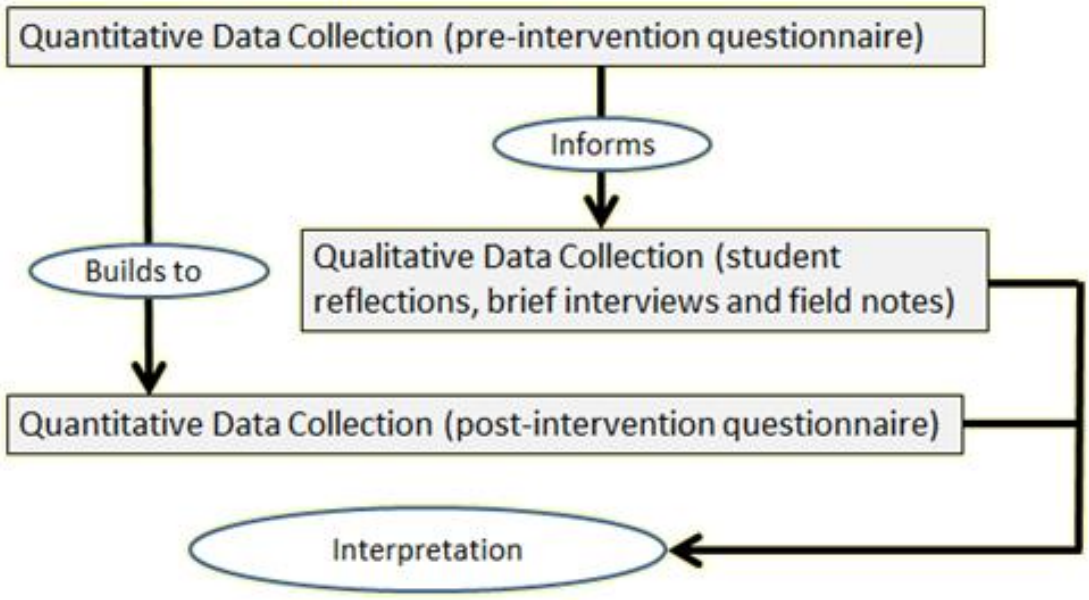
"that there are multiple legitimate approaches to social inquiry and that any given approach to social inquiry is inevitably partial" (Greene, 2007, p.20). Thus given the complex nature of educational phenomena, greater insights can be provided by "the use of multiple approaches and ways of knowing" (Greene, 2007, p.20). The data gathered for the study is largely qualitative. However, since the study evolves from a positivist tradition and uses quantitative data as a starting point to establish the most suitable participants and as a finishing point to gauge progress made by students, it seems most accurate to describe the study as using mixed methods.

6.4 Research Design

A variety of models of mixed methods design are suggested by Creswell (2003) but he emphasises that other models are possible. The model proposed for the current study is such an example since the design differs from those which Creswell outlines. The design in this study (see Figure 6.1), uses the principle of complementary assistance with the main instrument for collecting data being identified (Morgan, 1998). The main purpose of the current study is to gain insights into the views of first year undergraduate accounting students experiencing PSA with regard to their experience of presentation activities and if any parts of the intervention help in reducing their apprehension. Qualitative data collection is the main means of collecting evidence, principally achieved through accessing student written reflections but supplemented with notes from research conversations and field notes. Both prior to and following this main phase of data gathering, quantitative phases of research are conducted which incorporate McCroskey's (1970) PRCA-24 questionnaire. This follows the idea that it is possible to use different research methods "in sequence so that what is learned from one adds to what is learned from the other" (Morgan, 1998, p.367). In the current case the research would be impractical without this complementary design as it would be difficult to identify suitable participants, specifically those experiencing PSA, to take part in the qualitative data collection. As David & Sutton (2011, p.294) explain, one of the purposes of mixed

methods research design is to be developmental and includes sampling. Thus the analysis of the initial quantitative data collection informs the qualitative data collection stage since it enables extreme case sampling to be used; a purposive sampling method "used to select participants who exemplify characteristics of interest" (McMullen, 2001, p.11). This is supported by Creswell (2014, p.244) who emphasises that it may be outliers identified in the quantitative research that will be selected as the sample for the qualitative data collection. Students exhibiting PSA are likely to be such cases. To this end, the current study uses the PRCA-24 questionnaire as a complementary research instrument, used to help identify students who might be invited to participate in the qualitative data collection, so that as described by Creswell (2014, p.224) "the qualitative data collection builds directly on the quantitative results". Furthermore, an important advantage of the design is the ability to explore the results gained from the quantitative research in greater depth (Creswell, 2014, p.244). Despite the greater complexity of the current model when compared to those proposed by Creswell (2003), it is most closely aligned to Creswell's Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Model as it is used in a field "relatively new to qualitative approaches" (Creswell, 2014, p.224).

Figure 6.1 Research Design



As has already been mentioned, much of the research which has previously been conducted into OCA in general and specifically in the context of accounting undergraduates has taken a quantitative approach using the PRCA-24 questionnaire and until recently few studies have made use of qualitative methods which can potentially provide richer insights into the feelings that students hold about presentations (Byrne et al., 2012, p.577). One exception is Byrne et al. (2012) who provide an example of research into OCA amongst accounting students which makes use of interviews. According to Byrne et al. (2012), interviewing participants helps in developing an understanding of "the reality of the apprehension" which some undergraduates experience (Byrne et al., 2012, p.577). Nonetheless, while the research is presented as qualitative, those who took part in the interviews were selected based on how they responded to the PRCA-24 questionnaire (Byrne et al., 2012, p.568). The current study uses a similar approach to that adopted by Byrne et al. (2012) but whereas Byrne et al. (2012) researched the general feelings that students had towards oral communication, the current study investigates their feelings towards oral presentations and tries to determine how the module that they are studying contributes, if at all, towards the developing confidence and skills in the delivery of oral presentations by those with PSA.

It might be argued that the current study resembles an action research approach. Indeed, "the pragmatic characteristics of mixed methods research" and the underpinning principles of action research are similar (Phillips and Davidson, 2009, p.195). Despite this, if it is accepted that action research focusses on "changes in practice" (Trollvik, Eriksson, Ringsberg, and Hummelvoll, 2012, p.32) then this study should not be categorised as action research as the aim seeks to provide an insight into established practice. Despite this assertion, possible innovation is not ignored; when ideas for changes in practice occur as a result of the study they are considered and if deemed appropriate are implemented as part of the ongoing development of the intervention.

Another consideration is how the design of the study impacts on the case being studied. Maxwell (2012, p.71) recognises that the research design is a real entity and that by the very fact that the research is conducted there will be an impact on the study. This is true of the researcher's motives and plans for the research which may not align with what happens in the research. Therefore, as has already been mentioned, the case being studied is inevitably different when compared to the context had the research not been conducted. However, it may be argued, given that I would have been part of the context in any case, that the context is not altered as much as if an external researcher had conducted the study. Nevertheless, the fact that over the duration of the study my interactions with the students, module tutor, teaching material and assessment material have a dual purpose ensures that there is a real difference when compared to years when no research is taking place. The impact of the study may also be reduced by the decision to draw data from activities which already form part of the module. The PRCA-24 questionnaire is part of a group of self-assessment questionnaires that students complete at the beginning and end of the course. The reflections that are accessed are completed by students following major activities, including the three presentations. The only novel aspect of data collection is the one-to-one conversations with those students experiencing PSA.

6.5 Research Process

Each year a group of between 120 and 150 students begin their first year of study on the Accountancy course at a post-1992 university in the North of England. The cohorts are diverse but have high proportions of male students, Black and Minority Ethnic students, students living at home and students entering with Business and Technology Education Council qualifications. As part of the module which is the focus of the current study the students complete a series of baseline activities and surveys with the aim of providing them with insights into their development in and attitude towards a range of competencies as they begin studying at university. The PRCA-24 questionnaire with an

additional open-ended question investigating previous experiences of oral presentations is included as part of this baseline. The same questionnaires including the PRCA-24 are administered at the end of the first year of study. The purpose of this is to provide evidence for students to use when writing end of year reflections on their progress in a variety of generic skills. During the intervening period, in addition to three group presentations the students work as groups in class and hold group meetings in their own time so that they can prepare and practise the presentations. In addition, they observe presentations delivered by peers and write feedback for their peers. Following, each project the students answer review questions and write reflections on their experiences of preparing and delivering the presentations. In addition, as has been mentioned, the students write a final reflection in which many of them write about their experiences of delivering oral presentations. It is explained to the students early in the course that research is being conducted in the module and the nature and aims of the research explained. The students are told that if they do not wish to take part then they simply need to indicate this when they complete components of the research during the year. They are reminded of this when they complete the first group of online questionnaires with the first question asking them to indicate their decision. After completing the first questionnaire, students exhibiting PSA are identified and invited to participate in one-to-one research conversations, while all members of the cohort are invited to share written reflections during the year.

Table 6.2 summarises the involvement of different cohorts in the study. Permission had been sought from students studying in the two cohorts prior to the main study beginning for questionnaire data to be used for research as part of the study. In addition, two students from the first cohort, who exhibited PSA on the PRCA-24 questionnaire, agreed to participate in piloting the collection of qualitative data by sharing their written reflection and discussing their feelings about oral presentations. Specific permission was then sought from the three cohorts from 2014/15 to 2016/17 for data to be collected across the range of sources. However, the main collection of qualitative data was during

2015/16. It was during this year that student reflections were collected, research conversations conducted and occasional field notes were made. A further group of students from the 2016/17 cohort provided access to their reflections.

Table 6.2 Cohort Participation

Cohort	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
PRCA-24 (pre)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PRCA-24 (post)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
First presentation self-review	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reflections	No	Pilot	No	Yes	Yes
Research Conversations	No	Pilot	Pilot	Yes	No
Field Notes	No	No	No	Yes	No

6.6 Research Tools and Data Collection

Using a case study approach the current study seeks to understand which factors seem most influential in a classroom intervention aimed at developing presentation skills and helping those experiencing PSA. The particular setting selected for the study is one for which I have both contributed to the course design and in which I am involved in the teaching. The intervention has evolved over a number of years with contributions from the module tutor, myself and students. This has produced a complex intervention which seems to enable students to develop presentation skills and has helped many of those apprehensive at the prospect of presenting to gain confidence. In line with the guiding principles of qualitative research mentioned by Maxwell (2012, p.94), in the study I have selected a group and setting which is suitable for the study and to which I have access. The research is designed to make use of the activities that occur during the intervention. This means that the participants are not overburdened with extra activities which duplicate those that already exist.

6.6.1 Quantitative Data: The PRCA-24 Questionnaire

The PRCA-24 questionnaire is the most common instrument employed by researchers to investigate public speaking trait anxiety (Sawyer, 2016, p.406). In spite of the wide acceptance of the PRCA-24 questionnaire as a tool to research OCA, its use has been seen as contentious since it consists of twenty-four Likert scale questions producing responses from which means and measures of variance are derived. The original form of the questionnaire, the PRCA, was developed by McCroskey (1970, p.270). He conceded that the validity of scale-based research could be questioned but that other possible methods of investigating were inferior (McCroskey, 1970, p.271). McCroskey (1970, p.274) also noted that "[d]etermining the validity of any self-report measure is difficult." When discussing the original PRCA, McCroskey (1970, p.274) notes that the questionnaire "employs the Likert approach to measurement" and that such cases would usually be treated as yielding interval data (McCroskey, 1970, p.274). Likert-scale questionnaires are often used by researchers to derive statistics such as means and measures of variance but such practices must have clear underpinning (Boslaugh and Watters, 2008, p.202). There is concern with such practices in the use of Likert-scale questionnaires since it should not be assumed that the distances between each point on the scale are equal; for instance, the difference between 'strongly agree' and 'neutral' should not be presumed as the same as that between 'agree' and 'disagree' (Jamieson, 2004, p.1217). Furthermore, when discussing ordinal data, Stevens (1946, p.679) warns that calculating "means and standard deviations" implies "a knowledge of something more than the relative rank-order of data." Seventeen additional issues with the use of Likert-scales in empirical research are discussed by Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2011), ranging from the varied interpretations that individuals might have of different points on the scale to resistance that those completing such questionnaires might have to using the extremities of a scale.

While scepticism has been expressed with regard to the usage of data gathered from Likert-scale questionnaires as interval data, it is a widely used and accepted practice.

Norman (2010) affirms that "empirical literature dating back nearly 80 years" supports the use of data produced by research using Likert-scales as scale data. Despite the scepticism shown towards the use of Likert-scales, the PRCA-24 has a long history of use in OCA research with the results generated regularly being reported as valid and reliable. The PRCA-24 is therefore used in this research to situate it amongst previous studies into OCA, particularly in accounting courses, to identify those students likely to have high PSA, to compare the levels of PSA held by students before and after the first year of study at university and for comparison with student comments towards presenting. Students from the initial implementation of the PRCA-24 who indicate PSA are invited to have conversations about their apprehension and how they might approach the presentation activities. Permission is then sought from the students who decide to accept the invitation for the conversations to be used as part of the research. When the year of study is complete the comparison of questionnaires completed pre-intervention and post-intervention indicates students who might experience reduced, unchanged and heightened PSA and thus acts as a means by which further potential participants in the qualitative data collection can be identified.

Despite the PRCA-24's widespread use in research to assess the levels of OCA amongst accountancy students, only two studies, Ruchala and Hill (1994) and Miller and Stone (2009), appear to have measured changes in the OCA or PSA of students using the questionnaire. Both studies found that following their intervention, responses to the PRCA-24 indicated reduced PSA. However, Ruchala and Hill (1994) noted that none of their participants had exhibited high OCA. In the current research the PRCA-24 is administered both in the early weeks of the academic year and towards the end.

The statistical programme Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is used to analyse the completed questionnaires with reliability and construct validity assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Previous research has, with few exceptions, supported the internal reliability and construct validity of the questionnaire, yielding high Cronbach Alpha coefficients (Ilias, Razak, & Yunus, 2013). The data is analysed using suitable

statistical tests. The paired samples t-test is used to assess the results of the PRCA-24 so that any significant differences between its first and second administration can be identified. This is therefore used to assess whether there have been any reductions in apprehension amongst the research participants during the period of the intervention, whether the reductions are statistically significant and therefore not simply due to random variation. In addition to statistical significance, reporting the effect size is now considered important (Abbott, 2011). Therefore, for differences found to be statistically significant, the effect size measures the strength of the phenomenon, in other words, the effect of the intervention or any other influences.

In addition to the standard PRCA-24 questions, the initial questionnaire asks the students to write about their experiences regarding the delivery oral presentations (see Appendix 4).

> Please write about your experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations. In your response you should describe the situations and explain how you felt in them. If you have never spoken in front of an audience, then you should simply write 'No experience'.

The responses to this instruction are used both to gain deeper insights into the students' feelings about delivering oral presentations and to assess the degree to which the responses given on the PRCA-24 are reflected in the students written responses. In order to achieve the second of these objectives, the written responses are coded and an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test run to assess the consistency of the PRCA-24 scores and the coded public speaking experiences. In other words, the ANOVA test indicates if, amongst any of the groups established through coding, there is a statistically significant difference between the associated averages obtained on the public speaking subset of the PRCA-24 questionnaire.

In addition to the PRCA-24 questionnaire some scale questions concerning relevant topics were asked during the review of presentations. Specifically, questions about the

usefulness of peer observation were asked following the second presentation and questions on the use made of feedback were asked following the final presentation. The responses were analysed using appropriate statistical tests. Where the data was found not to be normally distributed, the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, for related samples, and Mann-Whitney U Test, for independent samples, were employed to test for statistical significance and to gauge the Effect Size of any differences.

Administration of all the quantitative data collection was electronically using Google Forms (see Appendix 4). This enables the data to be returned to the students for use in their own reflections and for it to be transferred to a safe electronic file for use in the research.

6.6.2 Qualitative Data: Reflective Writing and Conversations

The main source of data collection in this study is through qualitative methods. Qualitative data is collected from a number of sources in order to gain the deepest potential insights. Data collected from the students in the form of their reflective writing are the main source of qualitative data. The students write reflections following each presentation which range in length from about 200 to 1000 words and are completed using a reflection form drafted by the module leader (see Appendix 5). The practice of using student reflections as a source of research data, while having clear advantages, has been questioned, with possible limitations regarding to the reliability of such written accounts identified. The reflections used in the research form part of the module assessment; Power (2002) questions whether the accounts may be affected as a result. In addition, when the lecturer takes on the role of researcher, as is the case here, the possibility that the students might modify their reflections cannot be discounted (Coers, Lorensen, & Anderson, 2009). Also, when students are engaged in reflection the potential for self-enhancement and self-serving bias exists (Coers et al., 2009). In spite of the potential limitations of using reflective writing in research, the gaining of access to

reflections on the presentation projects is likely to provide a breadth of vision which would not be practical via research interviews alone. In practice all students in the cohort are invited to participate but a proportion are expected to decline to be involved. Despite the wider cohort potentially participating, the focus is on the smaller number of students who exhibit PSA during the initial PRCA-24 questionnaire.

It had originally been planned to conduct formal interviews with a view to gain an insight into the thoughts of those who had indicated they had PSA on the PRCA-24 questionnaire when it was administered early in the year. However, following Maxwell's (2012, p.73) observation that planned interviews may not turn out as intended, after the first few interviews with the 2014/15 cohort it seemed to that the students needed more help. As a result, instead of conducting formal semi-structured interviews, less formal research conversations were conducted with the 2015/16 cohort which had the dual purpose of helping the students think of ways they might approach oral presentations with less apprehension and providing insights into their thoughts about presenting. Rather than being interviews, the research conversations are akin to what Lippke and Tanggaard (2014) term "muddy interviews" where the interview is more than a research interview. In the current case the students, selected because they exhibit PSA, are initially asked questions about delivering oral presentations. Their responses are then discussed with them so that they might consider possible solutions to the issues they have. Taking such an approach attempts to gain a clear awareness of the experiences of these highly apprehensive participants so that the views and "constructions of reality" of the students can be examined (Punch, 2009, p.144). The main research conversations take place early in the course, before the first presentation has been delivered. The aim of the conversation is to discuss the presentations on the course and encourage students to consider ways in which they might be able to reduce or cope with the PSA that they experience. Brief conversations also took place prior to the second presentation. Similar conversations proved to be impractical with the 2016/17 cohort due to the long-term illness of the module leader.

The concept of validity in the evaluation of qualitative research methods has been questioned (Correa, 2013, p.209) due in part to its tradition being rooted in positivism (Winter, 2000, p.7) but also because of the diverse nature of research using qualitative methods (Nolen and Talbert, 2011, p.264). Despite this concern over the relevance of validity in qualitative research, the practice of member checking, in which research participants confirm their agreement with both the data and the researcher's interpretation provides support for the validity and trustworthiness of the data. This process was conducted once the qualitative data collected for each participant was merged and rationalised.

6.6.2.1 Establishing Themes

Consideration of a rationale to support the identification of themes may be omitted when studies are reported (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.86). This may result in a lack of transparency with regard to the identification of themes (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.86). An a priori approach was adopted for the development of themes in the current study which means that they are developed independent of the data and based on ideas identified in previous research on the topic (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.88). In spite of themes being established prior to collection of data, the development of themes inductively during data analysis is not precluded.

The student reflections were collected electronically, meaning that when being prepared for analysis they required little preparation. The research conversations were recorded digitally and transcribed electronically so that along with the reflections analysis could be conducted using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The resulting output from NVivo was assessed so that any themes could be identified which related to the causes of PSA, attitudes held by students concerning presenting and notions of what, if anything, might be helping reduce apprehension towards presenting.

6.7 Ethical Principles and Codes of Practice Guiding the Research

"Ethical concerns should be at the forefront of any research project" (Wellington, 2015, p.4). Since this study undertakes research into education it must adhere to British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011) guidelines. An important principle of educational research which BERA (2011, p.5) identifies is concerned with "voluntary informed consent", while an area of concern in the current study relating to this is coercion. As a result of the students who participate in the study being both assessed and tutored by the researcher, the existence of inadvertent pressure to participate on their part cannot be ruled out (Long, 2007, p.53). This could be as a result of, for example, students being afraid of negative consequences should they choose not to participate in the research or due to the students being faced with a researcher who inadvertently exerts pressure to participate due to over enthusiasm (Long, 2007, p.53). Consequently, it is important that those who might participate can fully "understand the process in which they are to be engaged" (BERA, 2011, p.5) and that the dual role of the researcher is clear (BERA, 2011, p.5). In addition, participants need to be aware of the right to withdraw and reminded of this right during the research process (BERA, 2011, p.6).

The opportunity to indicate the wish to withdraw participation in the current study is provided at regular points in the research process. In every electronic questionnaire that is used in the research the first question presented asks participants if they agree to allow their responses to be used for the study. If a student does not agree then they are removed from the entire study. Furthermore, early in the process of collecting data, time is dedicated to explaining the nature of the study and why researchers might be interested in conducting educational research. On such occasions participants are reassured that their decision to be involved or not in the research has no bearing, positive or negative, on their studies.

While "confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research" (BERA, 2011, p.7), there are circumstances in which it

may be necessary not to follow this norm. In such situations participants must be aware of the reasons that privacy is not maintained at the highest possible level and must be given the opportunity of withdrawing from the study. In the current study it is necessary to be able to identify participants so that the output from the PRCA-24 questionnaires, the student reflections and the research conversations can be linked. The participants are made aware that the data they provide is not anonymous to the researcher but that when the output from the research tools has been linked together then any elements which identify individuals are removed. For some students this process involves member checking which means the data cannot be anonymised until this process has been completed.

In order to conduct the current research, ethical approval was required from the University. Concern was raised by one of the reviewers over the level of privacy afforded to participants. The reviewer indicated that the design of the research did not uphold the highest level of privacy but was satisfied that participants were adequately informed about the nature of the research for them to make a decision concerning whether they should participate or not. Despite the concerns raised by the reviewer the proposal was accepted.

As well as the ethical considerations which have been mentioned, the handling, processing and storage of data requires particular thought in the current study. In each cohort of students, data is collected over a period of seven months with the data for students participating in the research needing to be copied from the larger data set which includes students not participating in the study. The data files are stored electronically and are both encrypted and password protected. The questionnaires are collected in Excel spreadsheets via electronic questionnaires which are also encrypted and password protected. Since the data in the initial files serves dual purposes of assessment and research, copies are made for research purposes with the data of non-participating students deleted. Only when all data has been collected and coordinated

are student numbers removed as this is the variable which enables data collected using separate instruments to be linked.

A further issue of an ethical nature relates to anything of concern revealed by the student reflections. While the reflections used for research purposes are anonymised, non-anonymised versions are stored separately as part of the students' electronic portfolios. Should an issue read in an anonymised version be deemed concerning then the module leader can be alerted and can decide whether the issue warrants further investigation. The version of the files retained for module purposes can then be accessed in order to identify the individual. This course of action was necessary on one occasion.

6.8 Limitations of the current study

It was intimated at the beginning of this chapter that the study will not satisfy the demands of those who believe that educational research should only produce generlisable results generated from experimental research. This study is naturalistic in nature and seeks to report findings from a particular context. It is not claimed that the findings generalise to other contexts but professionals should use their judgement to consider what aspects might be relevant to their settings.

Despite being a non-experimental study, the inclusion of a control group was initially considered. However, it was decided to proceed without a control group since all of the groups identified as possible control groups received some form of intervention designed to aid with the development of presentations. Furthermore, the nature of the intervention within the course is not uniform; it varies according to perceived needs of individuals and also varies from year to year. A further reason in support of the decision not to include a control group is that the assessment of the intervention itself is not an objective of the study. The study seeks to determine if elements of the intervention help students reduce PSA. Specifically, it focusses on those students who according to the PRCA-24 questionnaire have high PSA. The scope of the study does not allow for the

same level of investigation to take place for all students. Finally, given that a control group has not been included in the study the degree to which factors outside of the intervention may have influenced changes in PSA cannot be gauged. Factors such as maturation or the influence of guest speakers cannot be discounted as a possible cause for reduced apprehension. Furthermore, regression to the mean cannot be discounted as a contributing factor for changes in average scores on the PRCA-24.

It is inevitable that there is some bias in the sample. The participants in the study were those students who agreed to participate and who completed both the pre-intervention and post-intervention iterations of the PRCA-24 questionnaire. It may be that some individuals who left the course before it finished may have done so at least in part as a result of apprehension felt towards delivering oral presentations. There is no evidence that this is the case but the possibility cannot be discounted. Furthermore, some students who declined to participate in the study may have done so as result of the apprehension thinking about presenting raised.

The role of the researcher as a practitioner researcher has already been mentioned and requires careful consideration. It is important for the researcher to identify potential threats to the study posed when the researcher is part of their own research. As has already been mentioned, the nature of the intervention is changed as soon as research is conducted. Pilot interviews yielded insights which led to changes to the nature of the research and the intervention itself. It seemed that formally conducted interviews would be better conducted as less formal conversations in which data was collected but advice was also provided. This has had the result of the process of data collection contributing to the intervention in subsequent years.

The decision to use participant reflections has already been mentioned as having potential limitations. However, since a number of reflections are written over the course of the module and the principal purpose of reflecting is for the students to contribute to their own learning, the likelihood of widespread self-enhancement was considered small.

The limitations which have been mentioned should be kept in mind alongside the benefits of the research approach adopted when the results and discussion presented in the chapters that follow are considered.

Chapter 7: Results and Analysis: All Students

7.1 Introduction

The results of the study are now presented and analysed. This is divided into two chapters. This chapter is in two sections and considers data obtained from students from across the cohorts while Chapter Eight focusses on those students who exhibit PSA from the 2015/16 and 2016/17 cohorts. In the first of the sections in this chapter the pre-intervention and post-intervention administrations of the PRCA-24 questionnaire over five years are analysed. It firstly assesses if the average levels of apprehension felt towards public speaking, as indicated by the PRCA-24 questionnaire, have fallen for students across the five cohorts during the period of the intervention. It then assesses the degree to which its use in this study produces results for PSA consistent with previous research. This addresses the first aim which is to map changes in PSA exhibited by students during the six-month period of a multifaceted intervention aimed at reducing of PSA and developing oral presentation skills. For this aim two research questions are formulated. How does PSA as measured on the public speaking sub-scale of the PRCA-24 questionnaire alter during a six-month programme of presentation activities? To what extent are the results of the PRCA-24 questionnaire administered in this study consistent with its use in previous studies?

Having established evidence from the PRCA-24 in general, the second section in this chapter focusses on data collected from the fourth of the cohorts, the first for which qualitative data was collected. The first iteration of the PRCA-24, at the start of the course, and the student comments made immediately afterwards, about their previous experiences of presenting, are compared in order to assess the degree to which they are consistent and also to provide more detail concerning what the students' PRCA-24 questionnaire responses mean. The qualitative responses are then assessed in order to determine what can be learned about the levels of apprehension held by the most

apprehensive students and students who have gained confidence in presenting prior to the course. The main purpose of this section is to address the second aim of the study which is to identify factors which might influence levels of PSA amongst year one accounting students beginning their studies at university. For this aim there is one research question which is 'What factors appear to contribute to the degree of PSA experienced by accounting students as they begin studying at university?'

7.2 Pre-intervention and Post-intervention Comparison of Public Speaking Anxiety

The PRCA-24 questionnaire is administered at the beginning (September) and near the end (March) of the module along with other questionnaires so that the students have evidence of their progress in a variety of competencies. The data provided by the pre-intervention and post-intervention responses to the public speaking subset of the PRCA-24 for those who give permission for their data to be used are compared. In order to compare the pre-intervention and post-intervention responses to the PRCA-24 questionnaire Paired Samples T-Tests were used. This test assesses whether any differences in the pre-intervention and post-intervention averages on the PRCA-24 are statistically significant or if they are due to random variability. Where differences are statistically significant the Effect Size is measured using the two measures eta and Cohen's d. However, in order to use Paired Samples T-Tests the characteristics of the sample need to be assessed. Specifically, in order to use Paired Samples T-Tests the data should be normally distributed. Further, in order to assess the reliability of the questionnaire data, reliability analysis is conducted on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24, the questionnaire results are compared with those obtained in previous research using the questionnaire and an independent sample t-test is conducted to assess for the degree to which gender differences are similar to those reported in most previous studies (see discussion in Chapter 2). In analyses where the data is not

normally distributed the non-parametric equivalent of the Paired Samples T-Test, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, is used.

7.2.1 Sample Characteristics

The full sample across the five cohorts of students totalled 1066 responses from 601 participants to the PRCA-24 questionnaire. However, some participants only completed the questionnaire once meaning that for comparison of the pre-intervention and post-intervention administrations of the PRCA-24 questionnaire the 930 responses of 465 participants who completed both iterations of the questionnaire were used. The remaining 136 completed responses were largely from students who completed the pre-intervention PRCA-24 but had left the course or were absent when the post-intervention PRCA-24 was completed. However, a small number of the responses were from students who joined the course late and therefore missed the completion of the pre-intervention administration of the PRCA-24. This inevitably introduced a degree of bias in the sample. Some students who left the course may have done so due to apprehension towards presentations. There is no evidence that this is the case but the possibility cannot be discounted. The summary of responses to the pre-intervention and post-intervention administration of the PRCA-24 questionnaire (Table 7.1) shows that at the start of the module 73 students (15.7%) in the sample indicated that they had high levels of apprehension towards public speaking. Of these 73 students, 20 remained apprehensive according to the post-intervention questionnaire with 51 reducing to medium levels of apprehension and two to low levels. In contrast, of the 355 students who indicated medium levels of apprehension towards public speaking on the pre-intervention PRCA-24 20 students indicated high levels of apprehension following the intervention.

Table 7.1 Responses from the 5 Cohorts to the PRCA-24 Questionnaire

	Post-intervention apprehension			
Pre-intervention apprehension	Low	Medium	High	Total
Low	25 (5.4%)	12 (2.6%)	0 (0.0%)	37 (8.0%)
Medium	51 (11.0%)	284 (61.1%)	20 (4.3%)	355 (76.3%)
High	2 (0.4%)	51 (11.0%)	20 (4.3%)	73 (15.7%)
Total	78 (16.8%)	347 (74.6%)	40 (8.6%)	465 (100.0%)

The pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaire data for each cohort were assessed for the degree to which their distributions are normal and therefore appropriate for analysis using the parametric Paired Samples T-Test. Each cohort was assessed separately since there were differences in each implementation of the intervention. In order to assess for normal distribution a number of instruments have been used for all ten data sets (pre-intervention and post-intervention 2012-13 to 2016-17). Kurtosis and skewness are terms which refer to the concentration of data around the centre and the symmetricity of the data respectively (Corder & Foreman, 2014, p.17). Other instruments used which indicate normal distribution are Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests ($p<0.05$) and histograms with distribution curves overlaid which can be visually inspected for normality.

The z values for both kurtosis and skewness must fall between +/-1.96 (Corder & Foreman, 2014, p.24). This is calculated by dividing each score by its standard error. For all ten data sets the z values for both kurtosis and skewness fall between +/-1.96 thus indicating that the distribution of all ten data sets is normal (see Appendices 6b & 6c). The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test support a normal distribution if the level of risk is 95% or less, that is Alpha (α)>0.05, so that "there is no difference between the observed distribution of the survey scores and a normally distributed empirical sample" (Corder & Foreman, 2014, p.24). The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests support a normal distribution in all but two data sets, namely pre-intervention 2013-14 (0.004) and post-intervention 2015-16 (0.013) (Appendix 6d). However, inspection of the histograms with overlaid distribution curves supports the distribution of all ten

histograms as being normal (Appendices 6e & 6f). This evidence is therefore sufficient to support the assumption that all the data sets are normally distributed and therefore suitable for analysis using the parametric Paired Samples T-Tests.

7.2.2 Reliability

The internal consistency of the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 questionnaire data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The public speaking element consists of the six statements

1) While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

2) I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.

3) I feel relaxed while giving a speech.

4) Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.

5) I have no fear of giving a speech.

6) My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.

These are interspersed amongst eighteen other questions about the other forms of oral communication, namely Dyad, Group and Meeting, with the responses being provided on a five point Likert-scale. In order to analyse internal consistency, the three negative statements (1, 4 and 6) are reversed. The resulting Alpha score of 0.862 (see Appendix 7b) supports the internal consistency of the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 and can therefore, consistent with many previous studies, be considered to be highly reliable. All the six items contributed to the Alpha score with the score lowering if any item was deleted (see Appendix 7f).

The results of the PRCA-24 in general and the public speaking sub-section compare well with previous studies with the public speaking element sub-scale yielding the highest scores of the four spoken communication elements consistent with many previous

studies (see Appendix 8). Included in a ranking of 55 with 45 other administrations of the PRCA-24 questionnaire reported in academic journal articles, the five pre-intervention administrations of the questionnaire ranked 4th (2012/13), 7th (2016/17), 8th (2013/14), 12th (2014/15) and 16th (2015/16) highest scores on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 while the five post-intervention administrations of the questionnaire were ranked amongst the lowest on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 with 40th (2012/13), 43rd (2013/14), 44th (2014/15), 48th (2016/17) and 51st (2015/16) (see Appendix 8).

Finally, the results were analysed based on gender. Many previous studies (see Chapter 2) report that females have higher scores than males on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24. In order to assess the sample for gender differences, independent samples t-tests were conducted on both pre-intervention (see Table 7.2) and post-intervention (see Table 7.3) PRCA-24 questionnaire results.

For the pre-intervention use of the PRCA-24 questionnaire there was a significant difference between the two groups, t (463) = 5.351, p < .0001, with females (M = 21.42, SD = 4.495) scoring higher than males (M = 19.20, SD = 4.333). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 2.221, 95% CI: 1.405 to 3.037) was large (eta squared = 0.24 and Cohen's d 0.50).

Table 7.2 Independent T-Test for PSA and Gender (Pre-intervention)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE Mean
Female	190	21.42	4.495	.326
Male	275	19.20	4.333	.261
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F-value		0.003
		Significance		0.960
t				5.351
df				463
Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				1.405 to 3.037
eta squared				0.24
Cohen's d				0.50

For the post-intervention use of the PRCA-24 questionnaire there was a significant difference between the two groups (see Table 7.3), t (463) = 4.374, p < .0001, with females (M = 19.17, SD = 4.198) scoring higher than males (M = 17.31, SD = 4.713). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 1.861, 95% CI: 1.025 to 2.697) was medium to large (eta squared = 0.20 and Cohen's d 0.42).

Table 7.3 Independent T-Test for PSA and Gender (Post-intervention)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE Mean
Female	190	19.17	4.198	.305
Male	275	17.31	4.713	.284

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F-value	2.658
	Significance	0.104
t		4.374
df		463
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		1.025 to 2.697
eta squared		0.20
Cohen's d		0.42

These results support both the internal reliability, construct validity and external reliability of the public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24 questionnaire administered in this study.

7.2.3 Assessment of Changes in Public Speaking Anxiety

The levels of PSA as measured on the public speaking subset of the PRCA-24 before and after the intervention are assessed using Paired Samples T-Tests across all students and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for students indicating high apprehension and for those indicating medium and low apprehension.

7.2.3.1 Changes in Apprehension Levels for All Participants

Paired Samples T-Tests were conducted to evaluate the extent of any changes in the scores pre-intervention and post-intervention on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 questionnaire over the period of the module across all five cohorts from five academic years (2012-13 to 2016-17). The results are shown in Table 7.4 and indicate that there was a significant decrease in the average scores from Time 1 (Pre-intervention) (M = 20.11, SD = 4.53) to Time 2 (Post-intervention) (M =18.07, SD = 4.60), t(465) = 10.747, p < .0001 (two-tailed). The mean decrease in the Public Speaking subset of the PRCA-24 scores was 2.034 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 1.662 to 2.406. The eta squared statistic (0.20) indicates a large effect size while the Cohen's d (0.50) suggests a medium to large effect size. It is important to note that in the absence of a control group, maturation or other factors outside of the module cannot be discounted as causes contributing to this change.

Table 7.4 T-Test Paired Samples Statistics for all Students (2012-2017)

	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
Mean	20.11	18.07
N	465	465
SD	4.53	4.6
SE Mean	0.210	0.213

T-Test Paired Samples Test			Pre-intervention - Post-intervention
N			465
Correlation			0.600
Paired Differences	Mean		2.034
	SD		4.082
	SE Mean		0.189
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	1.662
		Upper	2.406
t			10.747
df			464
Sig. (2-tailed)			p < 0.001
eta^2			0.20
Cohen's d			0.50

7.2.3.2 Changes in Apprehension Levels for High Apprehensives

The cases in the sample of students revealing high apprehension on the public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24 were not normally distributed. Therefore, the non-parametric equivalent of the Related Samples T-Test, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, was used to test for statistical significance (see Table 7.5). The purpose of the test is to determine if there is a significant change in the score on the public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24 between time 1 (pre-intervention) and time 2 (post-intervention) for those students who exhibited PSA (a score of 25 or more) on the pre-intervention questionnaire. The Test results revealed that 73 participants exhibited PSA on the pre-intervention PRCA-24 and that there was a significant decrease in the score from time 1 (median = 27.00) to time 2 (median = 22.00) in the levels of PSA as measured in the public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24, Z=-7.007, p<0.0001, and the effect size was large (r = -0.58). The decrease in the mean scores was from Time 1 (M=27.11, SD=1.69) to Time 2 (M=21.9, SD=3.94).

Table 7.5 Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for High Apprehensives

Intervention	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Pre-	73	27.10	1.69	25	30	27.00
Post-	73	21.88	3.94	13	29	22.00

Post-intervention – Pre-intervention Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks (Post < Pre)	67	36.54	2448.00
Positive Ranks (Post > Pre)	3	12.33	37.00
Ties (Post = Pre)	3		
Total	73		

	Post-intervention – Pre-intervention
Z	-7.063 (based on positive ranking)
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
Effect Size (r)	-0.58

7.2.3.3 Changes in Apprehension Levels for Non-High Apprehensives

A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was conducted to evaluate the change in the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 scores over the period of the module for eligible students indicating medium and low apprehension in all five years (see Table 7.6). There was a significant decrease in the scores from time 1 (median = 19.00) to time 2 (median = 17.00) in the levels of PSA as measured in the public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24, Z=-6.765, p<0.0001, and the effect size was medium (r = -0.24). The decrease in the mean scores was from Time 1 (M=18.81, SD=3.606) to Time 2 (M=17.36.9, SD=4.362).

Table 7.6 Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Non-High Apprehensives

Intervention	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Pre-	392	18.81	3.606	6	24	19.00
Post-	392	17.36	4.362	6	29	17.00

Post-intervention – Pre-intervention Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks (Post < Pre)	224	179.04	40104.00
Positive Ranks (Post > Pre)	111	145.73	16176.00
Ties (Post = Pre)	57		
Total	392		

	Post-intervention – Pre-intervention
Z	-6.763 (based on positive ranking)
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
Effect Size (r)	-0.24

7.2.4 Analysis

The results of the Paired Samples T-test conducted on the whole sample and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests separating the students exhibiting high PSA from those with medium or low PSA according to their responses on the pre-intervention administration of the PRCA-24, support the notion that between the beginning of the intervention and its end the levels of apprehension towards public speaking fall on average in the sample.

Furthermore, the decrease in apprehension is on average large for those students indicating high levels of apprehension towards public speaking on the PRCA-24 questionnaire. As has already been mentioned, in the absence of a control group for this study, maturation or other factors cannot be discounted as contributory reasons for the difference between the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores in the PRCA-24. However, given the large size effect attached to the fall in the mean PRCA-24 score for those starting with high levels of apprehension, the qualitative analysis which follows aims to provide indications of what factors in the intervention contribute towards the improvements in the average levels of apprehension exhibited by the students.

The analysis so far has addressed the first two research questions directly. The first research question is 'How does PSA measured on the PRCA-24 questionnaire alter during a six-month programme of presentation activities?' The results show that over a five-year period during which data was collected the module had a fall in the average of PSA as measured by the PRCA-24. This is also true for each of the five cohorts (see Appendix 8). The results are averages, so while for the majority of students there is a fall over the period of the intervention, some individuals experience a rise in apprehension. For those students initially indicating high levels of PSA the effect size is large while for those who did not initially exhibit high levels of apprehension the effect size is medium. The second research question is 'To what extent are the results of the PRCA-24 questionnaire administered in this study consistent with its use in previous studies?' The results presented in this study are consistent with those presented in previous studies. All ten administrations of the PRCA-24 are within the range found in previous studies with the five pre-intervention average scores towards the top of the range and the five post-intervention averages towards the foot of the range (see Appendix 8).

Despite the decreasing average score on the PRCA-24, the data shows that a total of forty students indicated they were apprehensive towards public speaking following the intervention. This consisted of 20 students who remained highly apprehensive but an additional 20 who indicated that they had become highly apprehensive. As well as

considering how the intervention might have helped reduce apprehension the analysis in Chapter Eight attempts to highlight why apprehension might have increased for some.

7.3 Comparison of Initial PRCA-24 Data and Student Comments

This study now moves to consider evidence gathered from one of the cohorts of students (2015/16) who have studied the module. In doing so it addresses the question of 'What factors appear to contribute to the degree of PSA experienced by accounting students prior to studying at University?' and assesses the extent to which the PRCA-24 data reflects the accompanying written comments of the students before the module begins.

During the first week of the course the students complete the PRCA-24 questionnaire. The cohort which form the main focus of this study, namely the 2015/16 were additionally asked to comment on their experience of public speaking by responding to the request, 'Please write about your experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations'. The purpose of asking for additional comments immediately following the first administration of the PRCA-24 was to provide a richer picture of students' feelings about presentations and to assess the degree to which the comments made supported the findings of the PRCA-24. The comments made by the students were coded into five broad themes. The comments made by the students and themes with which each was coded are shown in Appendix 9. One theme, Positive, represents accounts in which the students expressed only positive feelings towards situations in which they had presented. Another theme, 'Negative' represents those statements which conveyed a sense of negativity towards presenting and consisted mainly of those discussing feelings of nervousness. Another theme, 'Overcome' represents accounts which demonstrated that feelings towards presenting had improved. Accounts not conveying any idea of feeling or emotion towards the experiences of presenting are labelled 'Neutral'. Finally, a category for those who had indicated that they had had no previous experience of presenting was also included. These coded

comments were then compared with the data from the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 questionnaire (see Table 7.7). The full data for this comparison is shown in Appendix 9.

Table 7.7 Comparison of Response to 'Please write about your experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations' and the Public Speaking subset of the PRCA-24

Response to 'Please write about you experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations'	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum /30	Maximum /30
Negative	37 (29.6%)	23.03	3.80	14	30
No experience	15 (12.0%)	20.40	4.17	14	28
Neutral	24 (19.2%)	17.88	3.30	11	23
Overcome	29 (23.2%)	18.86	3.70	9	27
Positive	20 (16.0%)	15.85	3.30	11	25
Total	125 (100.0%)	19.61	4.42	9	30

Table 7.7 shows the mean score for PSA on the PRCA-24 for each coded group of students. The table shows that those who wrote negatively about their previous experiences had the highest mean score (23.03). Those with no experience had the second highest average score (20.4) while the lowest PRCA-24 mean was for those writing about previous positive experiences of presenting (15.85). While such a pattern might be expected, it is still necessary to test for significant differences and to report the size effect of any differences between the coded groups. Therefore a one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the consistency of the reported public speaking experiences and scores on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 (see Table 7.8). The result of the test revealed a statistically significant difference at the $p<0.0001$ level in the public speaking section of the PRCA-24 and the five groups $F(4, 120) = 15.187$, $p < .0001$. The actual difference in mean scores

between groups was large. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was 0.336 (see Table 7.9) which indicated a large effect.

Table 7.8 ANOVA of Reported Previous Public Speaking Experience and Scores on the Public Speaking Element of the PRCA-24

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Between Groups	812.596	4	203.149	15.187	p<0.0001
Within Groups	1605.196	120	13.377		
Total	2417.792	124			

Table 7.9 Measures of Association

	R	R Squared	Eta	Eta Squared
Public Speaking * Category Code	-.542	.294	.580	.336

Table 7.10 Multiple Comparisons of Categories Using Tukey's HSD Test

Mean Difference (I-J)	Negative	No experience	Neutral	Overcome	Positive
Negative	-	-2.63	-5.15*	-4.16*	-7.18*
No experience	2.63	-	-2.53	-1.54	-4.55*
Neutral	5.15*	2.53	-	0.99	-2.03
Overcome	4.16*	1.54	-0.99	-	-3.01*
Positive	7.18*	4.55*	2.03	3.01*	-
* = The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.					

The ANOVA test shows a significant difference exists between groups but this test does not establish which groups differ significantly. Therefore, a post-hoc comparison of categories using the Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (Tukey's HSD) test was conducted in order to determine which groups were significantly different to each other. The full results of the Tukey's HSD test are shown in Appendix 10 with a summary in Table 7.10. The results of the Tukey's HSD test indicated that the mean score for those

reporting positive experiences (M = 15.85, SD = 3.30) was significantly different from those reporting negative experiences (M = 23.03, SD =3.80) with a mean difference of 7.18, those reporting that their feelings towards presenting had changed (M=18.86, SD=3.70) with a mean difference of 3.01 and those reporting no experience of presenting (M=20.40, SD=4.17) with a mean difference of 4.55. The mean score for those reporting negative experiences of previous presentations (M = 23.03, SD =3.80) was also significantly different compared with those reporting that their feelings towards presenting had changed (M=18.86, SD=3.70) with a mean difference of 4.16 and those reporting no feelings towards presenting (neutral) (M=17.88, SD=3.30) with a mean difference of 5.15. There were no statistically significant differences in mean scores between any of the remaining categories. The result of this analysis supports the reliability of the responses provided by participants with a general pattern of the qualitative comments provided in response to 'Please write about your experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations.', supporting the quantitative responses provided in the public speaking element of the PRCA-24. This outcome supports the reliability of the results obtained from the PRCA-24 questionnaire.

However, given the spread of responses in each category it is clear that there is variation in the way that participants interpret the meaning of questions and a qualitative insight into their experiences is likely to provide a fuller picture of how different students feel about presenting. By way of illustration, one individual who scored 19/30 on the public speaking subset of the PRCA-24 stated 'Last year, in the foundation year, we had a couple of presentations. Even though I felt extreme nervousness in each one, I tried hard not to show it, and used hand gestures to seem more confident.' This score of 19/30 suggests moderate apprehension towards public speaking. However, the accompanying statement would support the view that this individual is highly apprehensive in such situations. On the other hand, another individual who also scored 19/30 on the public speaking subset of the PRCA-24 stated, 'During A levels we often had to present PowerPoints to the class which involved taking over parts of the lessons

and explaining certain topics. I usually felt relaxed and comfortable.' This statement would seem to support a much lower level of apprehension when compared with the first example. This illustration emphasises the value of looking beyond the quantitative evidence provided in the PRCA-24 questionnaire to consider the detail of the student experiences of presenting to audiences.

Having categorised the student responses into themes, the responses were analysed in order to gain an insight into what might be causing apprehension for those who reported negative experiences, what reasons were given for those who had overcome apprehension and finally what reasons were given for feeling positive by those reporting positive experiences of presentations. Since the aim of the intervention in this study is to help students improve their presentation skills and confidence in delivering presentations, the responses of the 29 students who explained that they had originally been nervous presenters but had improved their confidence provide insights into what might have helped these students adopt a positive view of oral presentations.

7.3.1 Students who Overcame Apprehension

Considering students who claimed to have overcome apprehension, a variety of reasons were given as to why apprehension had diminished. However, the most common theme which was provided by thirteen of these students is the recognition that nerves can diminish during a presentation. A number report a similar story of recognising that they feel apprehensive prior to a presentation but that once the presentation starts this diminishes; 'I was always nervous at the introduction stage but I grew in confidence as the presentations went on.' Another popular reason mentioned in the responses concerned nerves diminishing with the experience of delivering presentations over time. Nine students fell into this category. No other reasons were as popular as these two but a variety of other reasons were given. Four students mentioned the importance of topic knowledge and preparation as a source of confidence with one individual identifying it as

the key variable in determining both their confidence and the quality of the presentation; 'Sometimes when I knew the presentation wasn't up to scratch I'd panic and deliver the presentation terribly.' Being part of a group was mentioned by three individuals as a reason for being more positive about presentations, while help from a tutor, peer review and confidence gained in a work context were also reasons identified by individuals for increased confidence in oral presentations. These brief insights given by students who had previously felt nervous but had reduced their nerves before the beginning of the course align with the design of the intervention. Developing presentation skills and confidence in delivering presentations is not simple and a course which draws on a variety of facets is likely to meet with the greatest success. Providing opportunities to gain experience of presenting seems to be important from this evidence. If the opportunities are structured so that the first attempts are as non-threatening as possible then more of the apprehensive students are likely to be willing to take part in presentation activities. However, these are students who have overcome a level of apprehension that they had previously experienced; this study is mainly focussed on those students who continue to be apprehensive about oral presentations. Therefore, discussion now turns to those individuals (37) who focussed their comments on how nervous they become in anticipation of having to deliver a presentation or how nervous they are during a presentation.

7.3.2 Students Expressing Apprehension

For students who exhibited apprehension towards presenting, there were a variety of features mentioned which students claimed contributed towards their apprehension. The most common theme was the audience, with twelve students mentioning the audience or a specific feature of the audience as being the source of their apprehension. As well as the size of the audience being mentioned, fear of presenting to an audience of strangers was mentioned by three individuals and a feeling of self-consciousness or being judged was mentioned by four. Further sources of nervousness mentioned included a fear of

forgetting what to say or making an error (10), the fact the presentation was being assessed (2) and the fact that the presentation was being delivered individually rather than as part of a group (1). As well as mentioning causes, some individuals mentioned what the apprehension they felt evoked. Such feelings may therefore become a cause of heightened apprehension since the students may be expecting to experience unpleasantness. In this context three individuals reported nerves caused them to make errors in the delivery of presentations, while a variety of other reactions were mentioned (overwhelming and scary, speaking too fast, murmuring, rushing, feeling sick and shaking knees, shaking, panicking, tensing and embarrassment).

7.3.3 Students Expressing Confidence

The final category of interest concerns those students who declared that they were confident when delivering oral presentations. They mentioned a variety of reasons which supported this confidence. The most common source of confidence was topic knowledge and preparation. Nine of the twenty students in this category mentioned that either topic knowledge or preparation or both were a source of confidence. One individual said, 'I felt very confident because I revised what I was saying and made sure it was right so I was happy and confident.' The fact that a presentation was delivered as part of a group was mentioned by three students while experience and audience members not being strangers were other reasons given.

7.3.4 Discussion

Drawing the reasons together from the categories discussed, the key determinants of apprehension expressed by the students in these responses mirror many of the reasons identified in previous research (see for example Pribyl et al., 2001, p.150) who synthesise causes identified by Beatty (1988) and Buss (1980)). However, the responses

also provide insights into which areas might be emphasised during the intervention in order to yield maximum benefit. The evidence provided by those who had previously been apprehensive but who had through experience of presenting gained confidence suggests many who are initially apprehensive may need to be encouraged to practise, especially if they are unsure of the likely benefits of such an approach. Similarly, the importance of thoroughly preparing the topic being presented may need emphasising for some. Both of these points relate to levels of apprehension which Griffiths (2000) explains as deriving from the level of mastery that the individual has over the task. That is to say, the lower the level of mastery the greater the level of apprehension is likely to be. It would also seem important to emphasise that the aim should not be to eliminate all nerves given that a certain level of apprehension is beneficial (Griffiths, 2000). This is particularly true given the large proportion of students who report that they are often initially apprehensive but soon become comfortable once the presentation begins. This also suggests that for some the focus may need to be on their tolerance of stress and thinking about how they might raise this in contexts, such as presenting, which cause apprehension. The intervention also aims to address the concerns of students who claim to be apprehensive due to a fear of making errors, a feeling of self-consciousness or a fear of being judged, or who focus on unpleasant reactions. This is approached by individual discussions with those most apprehensive students, as identified by the responses to the PRCA-24, and by placing emphasis on observation, peer review and feedback which is underpinned by CSP and are possible sources of self-efficacy.

This summary of the experiences of presenting reported by the students demonstrates the difficulty in drawing firm conclusions from the quantitative data derived from the public speaking subset of the PRCA-24 alone. Thus while using the PRCA-24 results to identify those who potentially experience PSA may be the most practical solution when determining participants who are nervous at the prospect of presenting to audiences, the details of responses of those discussing feeling nervous despite not indicating so in the

PRCA-24 and those who have overcome nerves relating to public speaking in the past might also yield useful information.

The analysis presented in this section has supported the notion that the results of the PRCA-24 generally support levels of apprehension expressed by students in their written accounts of their experiences of presenting but that the richer information provided by the written accounts demonstrates that anomalies exist.

In answering the research question, 'What factors appear to contribute to the degree of PSA experienced by accounting students prior to studying at University?', the evidence shows that feelings held towards presenting and the factors producing these feelings are varied but that being as prepared as possible and gaining experience of presenting are important factors in nurturing confidence and that the nature of the audience needs careful consideration given the responses of those anxious about presenting.

Chapter 8: Results and Analysis: Student Experiencing Public Speaking Anxiety

8.1 Introduction

The students considered for the main focus of the study are those who indicated that they had high PSA according to McCroskey's (1982a) definition, that is, any scoring more than 24/30 on the public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24. In addition, those who had scored 24 but whose accompanying response to 'Please write about your experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations', suggested that they might also be highly apprehensive were also considered. While initially considering those showing apprehension towards public speaking before the intervention, those who indicated high levels of apprehension for the post-intervention administration of the PRCA-24 are considered separately. As a result, ten students from the 2015/16 cohort and thirteen from the 2016/17 cohort, who scored highly on the initial PRCA-24 questionnaire were included in the initial study while three from the 2015/16 cohort and two from the 2016/17 cohort were included in a later analysis due to their high scores for PSA on the PRCA-24 administered after the intervention. One student, Nancy, was included in both sections since she scored 24/30 for public speaking on the initial administration of the PRCA-24, indicated particularly high apprehension in her initial written comments and scored 27/30 on the post-intervention administration of the questionnaire. It should be noted that all names used in this chapter are pseudonyms which relate the participants' gender and ethnicity but not nationality since the anonymity of one participant might then be compromised.

The chapter firstly establishes themes from the student reflections and comments which show an impact on either their apprehension towards presenting or skills development in presenting. It then considers evidence for each of the themes in turn. The chapter then

focuses on evidence from students indicating high apprehension on the post-intervention administration of the PRCA-24 questionnaire in order to ascertain any reasons why their apprehension increased.

8.2 Students Exhibiting Public Speaking Anxiety

Twenty-three students who matched the criteria for inclusion in the initial group for this element of the study agreed to take part in the research. Specifically, the eligible students who agreed to take part in the research confirmed that they felt anxious in anticipation of the first presentation and completed most of the projects during the year. A total of ten students who met the criteria were not included because in discussion they either indicated that they were not as apprehensive about the prospect of presenting as they had indicated on the PRCA-24 or, despite being happy to participate in the quantitative data collection, they did not feel inclined to participate in the qualitative data collection.

Of the twenty-three students in the sample, only Nancy had an increased public speaking score on the PRCA-24 at the end of the intervention, while thirteen had reductions in their scores of seven or more, two of these, Danny and Marwan, having decreases of double figures (see Table 8.1). In Danny's case this indicates that his level of apprehension towards presenting to audiences had, according to McCroskey's (1982a) classification of his PRCA-24 scores, reduced from high apprehension to low apprehension.

As with the students exhibiting PSA from across the five cohorts, the differences in the public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24 scores pre-intervention and post-intervention were tested with the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test due to the data not being normally distributed. The Test results, shown in Table 8.2 reveal that there was a significant decrease in the score from time 1 (median = 26.00) to time 2 (median = 20.00) in the levels of PSA as measured in the public speaking sub-section of

the PRCA-24, Z=-4.029, p<0.001, and the effect size was large (r = -0.59). The decrease in the mean scores was from Time 1 (M = 26.48, SD = 2.02) to Time 2 (M =20.83, SD = 3.69). Thus while maturation and other influences from outside the module cannot be discounted as having an effect on the large reduction in average PSA scores on the PRCA-24, the result warrants a closer investigation of what factors within the module might have the greatest influence.

Table 8.1: PSA Levels of Students in the Sample

	Public Speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24		
Name	**Pre-intervention**	**Post-intervention**	**Change**
Danny	27	13	-14
Marwan*	26	14	-12
Farah	28	19	-9
Dave	29	20	-9
Barry	26	17	-9
Nigel*	28	20	-8
Dean*	30	23	-7
Molly	26	19	-7
Bernice	24	17	-7
Donna	24	17	-7
Xenia	29	22	-7
Rahema	27	20	-7
Gloria	26	20	-6
Roy*	30	26	-4
Derek	24	20	-4
Ivy*	29	26	-3
Doris*	26	23	-3
Laura*	25	22	-3
Rob	27	24	-3
Kelly	24	22	-2
Vince*	26	25	-1
Ahmed*	24	23	-1
Nancy*	24	27	+3
Mean	**26.48**	**20.83**	**-5.65**
Median	**26.00**	**20.00**	**-7**

* = Students from 2015/16 Cohort

Table 8.2: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Median
Pre-intervention	23	26.48	2.02	24	30	26
Post-intervention	23	20.83	3.69	13	27	20

Post-intervention – Pre-intervention Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks (Post < Pre)	22	12.27	270
Positive Ranks (Post > Pre)	1	6	6
Ties (Post = Pre)	0		
Total	23		

	Post-intervention – Pre-intervention
Z	-4.029 (based on positive ranking)
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
Effect Size	-0.59

Given the evidence that during the period of the intervention there is a statistically significant and large effect size in the changes in levels of apprehension towards public speaking of these students, the study now focusses on the features of the intervention that may contribute towards this. For this, qualitative data gained from the student reflections from both cohorts and conversations with students mostly from the 2015/16 cohort are analysed and some quantitative data from student reviews by both cohorts are used when appropriate. In doing so the analysis aims to reveal details of what might help these apprehensive students gain confidence towards delivering oral presentations.

In order to conduct the analysis the qualitative data sources first needed to be reduced to those aspects that were relevant to the study. The reflections of the students during the year can be on any aspect of the module and therefore are not always related to the presentations. For this the reflections were read and only those passages containing material which was considered relevant to the study were kept. Notes from any research conversations were added to the corresponding student reflections. This resulted in the qualitative data from each student being maintained in a separate Microsoft Word document with the addition of a spreadsheet containing any quantitative responses given in related questionnaires. These documents were then added to the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (see Appendix 11) and coded. The data was firstly coded by which of the three presentations was being discussed and then by themes relating to

evidence of changes in both apprehension and development of skills in the context of oral presentations (see Appendix 12). The themes identified are shown in Table 8.3. The most popular and relevant themes are now discussed in turn. An explanation of each theme can be found in Appendix 13 along with sources where they have previously been identified.

Through the duration of the module the impact of teamwork on how the students viewed the prospect of presenting was a strong theme. While this was generally a positive theme with 'Group Positive' being the most frequently occurring theme in coding, negative views of working in teams were also mentioned frequently. The overlaps between the Group themes and the themes of Preparation and Practice were so great that both Preparation and Practice were included as sub-themes of the Group theme since Preparation and Practice were rarely mentioned as individual activities.

Table 8.3: Themes Mentioned by Students in the Qualitative Data

	Presentation			
Theme	**First**	**Second**	**Third**	**TOTAL**
Group Positive	62	48	45	155
Preparation Positive	42	43	53	138
Practice	36	20	42	98
Group Negative	38	8	22	68
Feedback	29	12	13	54
Preparation Negative	29	4	14	47
Audience	16	16	13	45
Tolerance of Stress	11	6	21	38
Topic	5	13	19	37
Literature	8	7	9	35
Tutor Advice	13	8	13	34
The Process of Three Presentations	0	5	25	27
Peer Observation	9	4	3	16
Features of a good presentation	2	4	9	15
High Stakes	0	0	5	5
Reflections	0	1	3	4
Novelty	2	0	0	2
Illusion of Transparency	1	1	0	2
Peer Review	1	0	0	1
Total	**304**	**200**	**309**	**821**

8.2.1 Groups

Given the frequency with which the two Group themes were coded these were investigated further with four sub-themes emerging. These themes were 'preparation', 'practice', 'support and help' and 'social'. The themes overlapped considerably but were distinct often enough to warrant consideration in their own right. A further theme, only identified as positive but mentioned on a few occasions was 'safety in numbers'. A small number of these students specifically identified their apprehension as being positively affected by the fact that they were less conspicuous when part of a group. Furthermore, the themes of preparation (positive and negative) and practice coincide so often with the group theme that the few occasions on which they were clearly individual are mentioned in this analysis.

8.2.1.1 Preparation

The level of preparation which teams had put into a project was regularly mentioned as influencing the level of apprehension felt towards presentations. In the first presentation nine students clearly referred to how the team preparation had a positive impact on how they felt about presenting. Kelly, said, "When we began to hold our meetings about the presentation, everything seemed to be under control and I felt confident that we would do well." There was also evidence from the first presentation of where a lack of preparation by the team had reinforced levels of apprehension, with eight students suggesting this as a source of their continued apprehension. Preparation by the team was mentioned positively for the second presentation by ten students. Roy said that he had been encouraged that the group had organised a number of meetings, while Molly went further by explaining how successful the meetings that her group held had been,

> We had a lot of group meetings before the presentation. This was so that we were all aware of what we were doing and I believe that this helped keep us organised. I

strongly believe that we worked well as a team and we prepared in advance so that we would be confident for our presentation.

Only two students mentioned poor preparation as a source of apprehension for the second presentation. Bernice noted that the group was not as organised as it should have been and said, "it meant I was more nervous as the presentation day approached."

The final presentation also saw ten students discussing successful preparation by their team as contributing towards their growing confidence. Xenia detailed how the group worked together over the course of the project so that they all grew in confidence together. Kelly also emphasised her increased awareness of the importance of preparation, "It is important to … not leave everything to the last minute as this makes you a lot more uncomfortable and nervous about presenting". Danny, who saw the largest fall in his PRCA-24 score during the intervention, was clear as to how important preparation was in his success, "I have learned from doing class presentations this year … that the planning and organisation involved in the build up to the presentation is just as, if not more, important than the actual presentation," adding "every member of the presentation can bring new skills to the team and help to improve the presentation."

The negative impact of poor preparation was only mentioned by five students when reflecting on the final presentation. However, this was particularly insightful given that some had, in comments on previous presentations, signalled that they had become less apprehensive. Roy, who had been encouraged by the second presentation, was again nervous saying that the group left little time for preparation. Ivy, who had been encouraged by the preparation of the teams during the earlier presentations, cited a lack of preparation by her team as a source of her nervousness when anticipating the last presentation.

Finn (2007), Morreale (2010) and Byrne et al. (2012) mentioned preparation as a factor in determining PSA and this evidence supports this conclusion. Even when students have

reported previous reductions in apprehension, a lack of preparation can set them back and cause increased apprehension.

8.2.1.2 Practice

Practice relates directly to occasions when the students mentioned that practice or lack of practice had a direct impact on their apprehension. This was generally mentioned in a team context but occasionally the reference refers to practising alone. This theme gained importance over the duration of the module. There may have been a growing realisation of the importance of practice on confidence but also the design of the module supports the trend by including opportunities to practise as part of the third project.

For the first presentation 'Practice' was mentioned both in contexts in which it supported confidence and contexts in which a lack of practice was worrisome. Donna said that as some of her team were "very nervous" she saw the practice as an opportunity to gain confidence. Nigel had practised in front of a friend but felt he might have coped better if he had practised in front of his team.

The emphasis for both the second and final presentations was heavily in favour of the benefits of practising. Dean was one of six who reflected on practice for the second presentation. He was initially worried that the team members were reluctant to practise but then reflected that they ran through five practices on the morning of the presentation which had made him feel much better. Similarly, Nigel saw team practice as key to his confidence when emphasising how the team had practised together and provided feedback to each other. He summed up the impact that the project had on his thoughts about presenting when saying,

> After this activity, I felt more confident as to my own individual performance … as I constantly practised my speech in front of my whole group, which made it much easier for me to cope when it came to the actual presentation.

Molly also recognised the importance of practice in reducing her nerves, "On the day of our presentation we practised an hour beforehand; this … helped ease our nerves." However, Doris mentioned practising her part on the morning of the presentation in an attempt to alleviate her apprehension but admitted that she remained nervous.

Ten students specifically mentioned the positive impact of practising when reflecting on the final presentation. As already mentioned, a formative practice with an AST was built into the module for this presentation, which may have increased the focus on this theme. Dean mentioned how the fact his team "rehearsed numerous times" had contributed to his confidence. Xenia also noted that practice with her team had helped her improve both the presentation and her confidence. Donna went into detail about the benefits she experienced from practising the final presentation with her group. She explained that they had several practices which made her realise that other members were very nervous. She saw this as an opportunity to draw on her own experience and talk to them in order to reassure them.

Kelly was one of the few who mentioned regret. She noted a lack of practice by her team and how this had caused her to worry.

> We only had our first practice of the presentation on the morning we were supposed to present which was very stressful as a few members of the group hadn't practised ... Because of this, I was a lot more nervous about presenting as I felt quite unprepared and I think these nerves were shown in the actual presentation.

This theme shows that those who practised, particularly in front of an audience, tended to gain confidence. Donna's evidence shows that she is sharing her experiences of feeling apprehensive about presenting with members of the team and that practice is a means by which she achieves this confidence. This is an example of where Illeris's (2009) model of learning serves to illustrate what is happening well and may indeed have different emphasis for each member of the group. Donna signals in her comments

that her actions are designed to help others with their nerves; Donna's aim seems to be that other members of the group learn from her. While the emphasis is on the incentive dimension, with easing of nerves, skills in public speaking may also be improved through practice which would be classed as learning in the content dimension. It seems that internal learning of this nature would be less likely had it not taken place in this social context.

8.2.1.3 Support and Help

'Support and help' was identified when students made less specific comments which generally related to the reassurance that being part of a team gave them or that other members of the team had been generally supportive. This was a strong positive theme which almost half of the students mentioned for each of the presentations. The only two negative comments for this theme came for the first presentation. Donna said that she "began to feel stressed" because early on in the project other team members "did not care or offer help" and Barry was also disappointed by the lack of contribution made by his peers during the entirety of the project.

Dean and Marwan were in the same team and both mentioned the positive impact that support by team members had on reducing the apprehension they felt. Knowing that team members were willing to step in to help gave them confidence. Derek noted that everyone in his team "was finding it nerve racking" but that by talking to each other about their feelings towards the presentation had helped ease their worries. Kelly, Ivy, Roy, Vince and Farah all mentioned support from team members as being a factor in easing their apprehension.

The second presentation provided further evidence of students reflecting on how the support provided by the team had been a factor in their reduced apprehension. Marwan gave more detail on how the team had helped, describing it as "crucial in allowing me to conquer my fears". He said that

> They felt it was best for me to keep rehearsing and memorising what I was going to say. They recommended not reading from a paper as it may instead force someone to read quicker and miss more key information out.

Other students suggested that there was a link between their improving view of working with others and their attitude towards presenting. Doris said, "The more I worked with others, the more comfortable I found myself therefore enabling me to develop my teamwork skills and also presentation skills." In Gloria's case she felt that working as a team brought her a wider range of skills and knowledge because she was learning from others and that by learning to trust them helped her reduce her apprehension. Nancy saw the whole process of working with different students on different projects as helping to boost her "confidence in talking to new people" and as a result "helped with presenting to new people."

The final presentation produced similar examples of students recognising the support of peers. Doris and Rob identified group support as contributing to their growing confidence. Marwan again provided an insight into his view of the support he received but moved the emphasis away from reducing apprehension to focus on the quality of the presentation, stating his belief that the group was able to excel because "each member supported one another by offering advice on what they could do better and how they could further improve". Kelly felt strongly that she had much greater confidence towards presentations and discussed the impact of this.

> By the final presentation I felt that my confidence in presenting had drastically improved. Part of this was because I became a lot more confident in working in a group as we had all collectively worked well together to ensure that we all knew what we were doing and helped one another out if we were struggling. Because of this, I was able to push myself to get involved with things outside of my studies such as applying to be a second year Peer Mentor. This is something I previously wouldn't feel confident in doing as the application process involved taking part in group activities.

The comments made in this theme lend strong support to the notion that students are able to learn from each other. Furthermore, Marwan's comment about the second presentation shows how support from his team provides reassurance which reduces his high levels of apprehension and at the same time helps him develop skills associated with delivering good presentations. This shows learning in the incentive and content dimensions happening through social learning. This example illustrates where apprehensive students learn from more confident peers and in the case of Derek from other apprehensive team members supporting the development of self-efficacy through verbal persuasion.

8.2.1.4 Social

'Social' related to the fact that the project and presentation were taking place in a group context and related to the general functioning of the group. The comments in this category gave no detail about actions taken in terms of preparation, practice or peer support.

For the first presentation there were a few comments, both positive and negative, in this category. The positive comments focussed on how working as part of a group made students "relaxed" (Donna, Kelly and Rahema), "comfortable" (Farah), "at ease" after initially being apprehensive due to uncertainty about how to proceed (Danny) or "less nervous" (Xenia). The negative comments which contributed to apprehension centred on "difficulty communicating" (Ahmed), "having to worry about others" (Rob), and the poor functioning of groups (Laura and Nancy).

For the second presentation the comments in the 'Social' category had become almost entirely positive. While Nancy continued to feel that she was in a poorly functioning group, the remaining comments mostly related to the fact that the students had been free to choose the teams and therefore were encouraged by being in a team of friends

(Xenia, Barry, Kelly and Rahema). However, Nigel gained some reassurance when he learned that others in his group were nervous too.

The final presentation also had many more positive comments in this category than negative ones. Doris originally felt teamwork added to her apprehension but now felt it helped her develop and grow in confidence. Similarly, Ivy felt that working with peers helped her grow her confidence and, similar to many in the second presentation, Rob identified being with friends as important. However, Donna provided great detail as to the impact that working as part of a team had on her nerves by the final presentation when she wrote,

> … by now I was enjoying working in groups as my confidence was constantly rising and I was learning more about myself each time. Through team working many more skills were developing. By the time of my last presentation I barely got any nerves. … When looking back on how much of a nervous, worried, panicky person I was, a year before I would have never done anything like this ever and I would have run a mile with hearing the word presenting and teamwork; to see this improvement is phenomenal.

The negative comments came from Anthony who was worried about the level of commitment shown by some of the team members in his group and Barry who said that the poor functioning of the group meant that he "felt even more hatred towards presenting."

8.2.1.5 Summary

Given the nature of the activities as group projects underpinned by PBL, it seems inevitable that the students would refer to the group context when discussing their experiences. Despite this, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that if a group of students are willing to work as a team then learning processes promoted through these activities can occur. Students in this social situation can learn about how to become

better presenters from other team members (the content dimension) and they can gain confidence towards presenting (incentive dimension). Much of the time these may be working together with the student gaining confidence through learning more about presenting in preparing and practicing with their team. Marwan is a case in point. He took confidence from the readiness of his teammates to support him and also noted advice that they gave him concerning how he could become a better presenter. While he continued to maintain that he was apprehensive, even when reflecting on the final presentation, his focus had shifted to concern about the quality of the presentation. However, it seems for some other students that learning might be promoted solely towards the incentive dimension meaning that apprehension can be eased by talking to fellow students with similar feelings (Derek), realising other students have similar feelings (Nigel) or by being with people who have gained the apprehensive student's trust. In contrast, students who are part of dysfunctional teams with team members who are not supportive have their learning opportunities restricted and if no progress is made in learning they may have their negative perceptions of presenting reinforced, for example, Barry who declared hatred towards presenting.

8.2.2 Peer Observation

Peer Observation provided another insight into how the students learn from each other and in doing so may help develop their confidence towards oral presentations. Along with the final administration of the PRCA-24 questionnaire, the students were asked some supplementary questions, two of which concern peer observation of presentations (see Table 8.4).

Table 8.4 Peer Observation of Presentations

	Observing peers presenting helps me develop my ...	
	skills.	**confidence.**
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	3
Neither Agree not Disagree	3	3
Agree	11	12
Strongly Agree	9	5
TOTAL	23	23
Mean	4.26	3.83
Median	4	4
Mode	4	4
Standard Deviation	.689	.937
Pearson Correlation (ρ)	0.708	
Significance (2-tailed)	0.01	

The data concerning peer observation shows that the mean agreement with the statement 'Observing peers presenting helps me develop my skills' is 4.26/5 and with the statement 'Observing peers presenting helps me develop my confidence' 3.83/5. There is a strong positive correlation ($\rho=0.708$) between the responses to the two statements which is statistically significant at $p<0.01$. This suggests that there is a tendency for the students to feel that as they are developing skills in presenting, they are also developing their confidence. Thus discussion of skills being developed through observing peers can be assumed to also indicate developing confidence. No causation is implied however.

The reflections of the students concerning peer observation were mainly from the first presentation with nine of the sixteen comments identified made following the first presentation. Anthony said that peer observation was useful because it had helped him see what others were doing wrong as well as enabling him to notice good features of peer presentations. Doris was encouraged by sitting through three presentations in which she had noticed that a number of students seemed nervous. She claimed that this had helped her to be more at ease when it was her group's turn to deliver the last presentation. Ivy also claimed that observing others before she presented was beneficial as it enabled her to visualise what she should do. Both Nancy and Nigel claimed to have learned from observing other presentations but neither explained why, with Nigel saying,

"Peer observation helped, I'm not sure how but mostly it was noticing good things and how poor reading is". Roy found the observation helpful because he noticed a student who was clearly nervous but managed to deliver his presentation. Roy claimed this had made him determined to do the same. Vince noticed how many presenters seemed confident in presenting and this enabled him to focus on what he should do when he presented. In the only negative comment about peer observation made by these students, Barry said that he knew that his group had not been well prepared for the presentation. Therefore, watching the first group deliver a "very good" presentation made him feel under "more pressure".

Barry and Nancy were amongst the few who reflected on the second presentation. This time the observation gave Barry the opposite feeling when compared with the feeling it gave him during the first presentation. On this occasion, after observing two presentations, he was very encouraged as his group knew that they were going to do "as well if not better". Nancy noted that being the first group to present made her slightly less apprehensive as she knew that those observing would not at that point be able to make comparisons with other presentations which would follow.

Just three students commented on peer observation when reflecting on the final presentation. Both Doris and Ivy specifically mentioned how the incorporation of peer observation had contributed to their confidence while Bernice wrote that initially she had been sceptical about the value of observing peers present but that in retrospect she felt that she learned from them.

The comments about peer observation generally support the evidence of the questionnaire data in that most of these students report peer observation as being beneficial. The reasons for this seem varied but a theme that is common concerns benefits from peer observation informing presentations in the short-term; many comments suggest that peer observations often inform an imminent presentation. A possible conclusion from this is that the sequencing of presentations might consider groups which have the most apprehensive students and allow these groups to present

later. Despite Nancy providing contradictory evidence, allowing the most confident groups to present first, whether good presenters or not, can help many of the more apprehensive students notice aspects of these presentations which may either support their skills development or confidence. Given the high positive correlation between student perceptions of the benefits of peer observation helping with the development of skills and confidence, it may not matter which element students see observation as helping.

This aspect of the intervention draws on the principles of CSP in encouraging students to value the work of their peers. Many of the comments made by the students support the development of their self-efficacy through the observation of others successfully completing the task. Perhaps surprisingly, this encouragement even extended to noticing that presenters were nervous or not particularly good. The evidence presented suggests that by observing peers deliver their oral presentations, students might have the opportunity to learn in the incentive dimension by contributing to their confidence and the content dimension by helping to notice skills.

8.2.3 Feedback

Formal feedback in the module involves both peers and tutors and is another potential contributing factor towards the development of confidence amongst apprehensive students, being a source of self-efficacy. Following the final presentation, the students were asked about their use of feedback on presentations during the module. The level of engagement with feedback claimed in general was 100% for the first two presentations, falling to 73.9% (17 students) for the final presentation. This might be expected as the final presentation forms one of the main summative assessments of the module; unless reflecting on presenting in their final reflection of the module, students may not see the need to access the feedback.

Table 8.5 shows the type of feedback, peer or tutor, accessed by these students for each presentation. Across the three presentations, students only twice indicated that they had accessed Tutor Feedback exclusively. Indeed, all of the twenty-three students claimed to have accessed peer feedback following at least one presentation and sixteen claimed to have accessed peer feedback on all three presentations. Despite this, the responses indicate a preference for Tutor Feedback since out of 63 responses only three indicated that the peer feedback had been used more than the tutor feedback with the reverse total being 23. As with the peer observation, comments made in the reflections on this feature of the project came mostly following the first presentation. Of the 54 occasions when a comment was labelled 'Feedback' 29 of the comments were made following the first presentation, 12 after the second presentation and 13 after the final presentation.

Table 8.5 Type of Feedback Accessed for Each Presentation

Feedback	First	Second	Third	Total
Only Tutor	1	1	0	**2**
Mostly Tutor	10	8	3	**21**
Equal	11	12	14	**37**
Mostly Peer	1	2	0	**3**
Only Peer	0	0	0	**0**
Total	23	23	17	**63**

Following the first presentation the comments made about feedback, while generally positive, only occasionally linked specifically to confidence with just four students making comments in this area. Laura gave no detail but stated that the peer feedback she received would help her "to be more confident in doing presentations in the future". Roy stated that the feedback was "beneficial" because it helped him understand "some details about what the audience thought". He added that it was therefore likely to give him more confidence. Bernice said that the group had "received very good reviews" which made her "feel more confident about presenting in the future". Finally, Kelly explained that the feedback from the peers noted that she had read directly from a script

and that it would have been better if she had not. From this feedback she concluded that by reading from a script because she was nervous, she had made things worse because this had been noticed in the peer feedback. She declared that she would not do this in the future as, presumably because of the feedback, it would help her "feel less stressed about presenting in front of others."

The remaining positive comments about peer feedback on the first presentation generally mentioned how the feedback was a useful way for them to learn how to improve. A small number felt encouraged by the feedback with one saying that it came as a pleasant surprise to get good feedback when she felt the presentation had been poor (Nancy). There were a few comments which focussed on the usefulness of receiving feedback from peers because it is given from a similar level of experience (Doris and Roy). However, there were two who clearly valued the tutor feedback more than the peer feedback; Dean stated that he valued the tutor feedback more because "they tend to have a better overall view".

There were a few negative comments about peer feedback with one focussing directly on how it had caused greater apprehension. Molly stated her dislike for peer feedback saying she "did not like the peer assessment as" she felt she was being judged on her performance by her peers, which made her "even more nervous". Despite this she expressed gratitude to be receiving feedback. The remaining negative comments focussed on the attitude of some peers who had either not provided useful feedback or who, in Danny's opinion, might provide bias feedback to friends.

Most comments on feedback for the second presentation were positive but as with the first presentation the focus was generally not directly on confidence. An exception was Dean who said that he had been "extremely nervous and stressed" and said that he had anticipated that the feedback might be useful to show suggestions for how to improve. He said that he was surprised to find that the feedback was extremely positive and did not mention his nerves at all. He particularly highlighted the tutor feedback which he reproduced; "clear strong voice with a well-paced confident delivery". He concluded that

this experience had given him confidence as he now knew that he appears more confident than he actually is "and that the audience will not pay particular attention to" or notice his nerves. This comment provides an instance of feedback helping an apprehensive presenter understand the illusion of transparency identified by Savitsky and Gilovich (2003) and has provided a transformational learning experience. The remaining comments focussed on confirmation that the presentation had gone well (Nigel, Roy, Farah), how useful the feedback was in clarifying how they might improve (Doris) or simply that the feedback was positive (Barry). One negative comment focussed on peer feedback in which Farah said that "it was not always useful" because some of it had focussed on how similar the content of her presentation was to another one.

There were again only a few comments concerning feedback for the final presentation. While this approach may have initially been a novelty, some of the comments made suggest the students appreciate the value of feedback. Ahmed said that he was anticipating receiving some "useful feedback from the audience" to help him improve and Ivy claimed that the feedback she received had contributed to her confidence. Donna reflected on the progress she had made over the year and wrote that "the peer feedback was incredible" because it supported the progress she had made in reducing her apprehension. Xenia and Danny also noted how they viewed the peer feedback positively; however, Bernice while appreciating feedback from the tutors, which had helped reduce her apprehension slightly, felt that she had improved very little as a presenter over the year.

The use of feedback, as with the peer observation draws on the principles of CSP by incorporating feedback from peers as well as tutors. The questionnaire responses suggest that few of the students place greater value on peer feedback when compared with tutor feedback; a conclusion supported by comments made by three students. This is further supported by the negative view of peer feedback mentioned by a number of the students reflecting the issues of bias and lack of seriousness found by Lapham and

Webster (1999). Despite this, Molly appears to be the only student to make a comment about peer feedback negatively affecting her apprehension and the quantity of comments identifying peer or tutor feedback as a factor in nurturing growing confidence suggests it is an approach which may be worth persisting with. Of particular interest is the comment by Dean relating to the illusion of transparency. If feedback can help students who feel conspicuous realise that they are far less conspicuous than they feel then this may be of great value.

Both peer and tutor feedback on the presentations discussed by the participants seems to support previous assertions by Hassall et al. (2013b) that although not as strong as other sources of self-efficacy, positive feedback can contribute towards apprehensive students' confidence in delivering oral presentations.

8.2.3 The Audience

Features of the environment in which presentations are delivered but particularly audience characteristics have been mentioned in previous studies, for example, Finn (2007). In this study the audience was the only feature of the environment to emerge as a theme. Midway through the module the students in both the 2015/16 and 2016/17 cohorts were asked about the nature of the audience they preferred in terms of acquaintances and strangers. This ranged from a strong preference for an audience of acquaintances (1) to a strong preference for an audience of strangers (5). The result was analysed to assess if those who indicated high apprehension for delivering oral presentations on the pre-intervention PRCA-24 exhibited different audience preferences when compared with those who had indicated that they were not highly apprehensive. The data was found to be normally distributed and therefore an Independent Samples T-test was conducted to test for the existence of any differences in audience preference. The analysis indicated that there was no significant difference between the two groups, $t(184)= 2.193$, $p<0.33$, two-tailed with those not having PSA ($M=2.72$, $SD=0.955$)

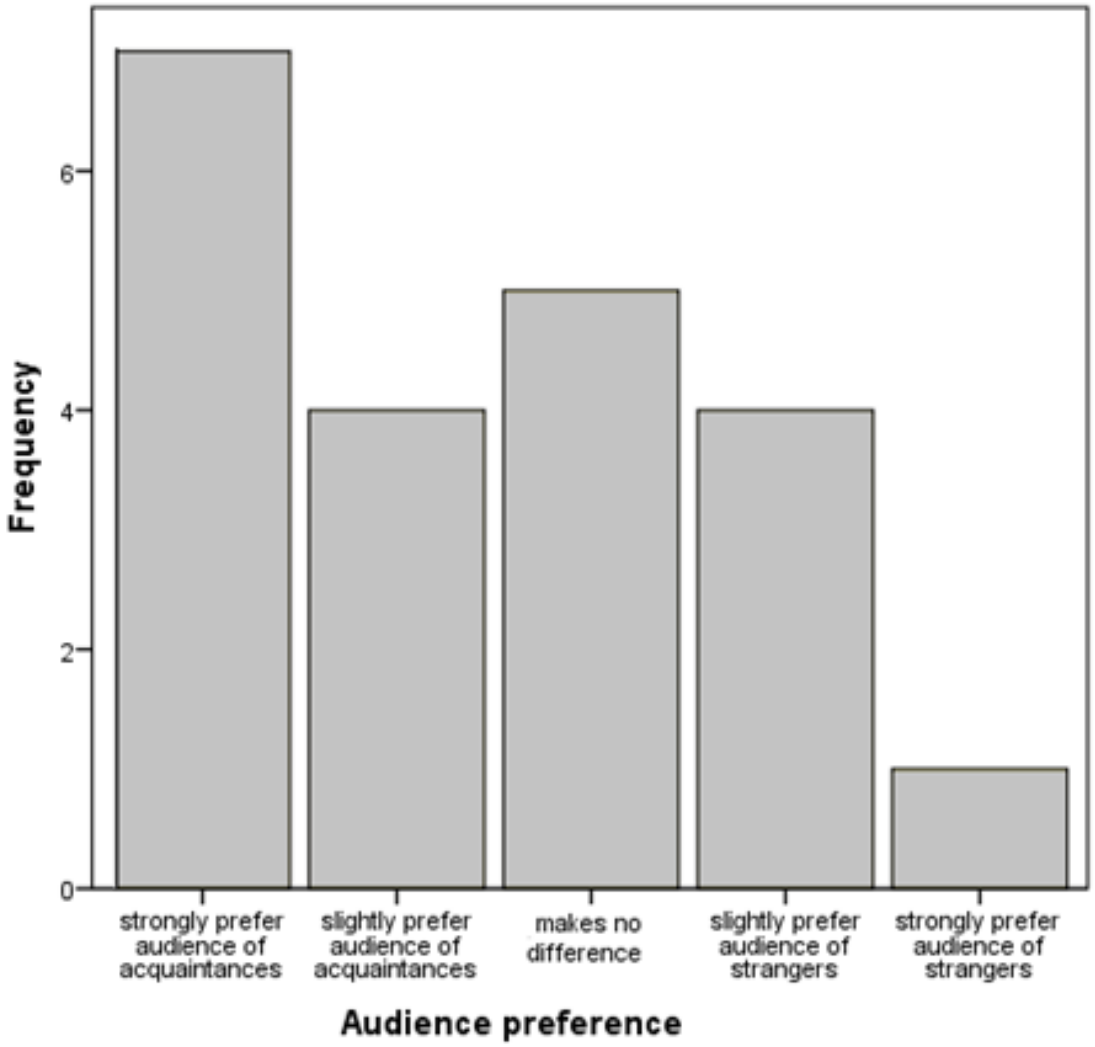
scoring higher, with on average a slight preference for an audience of acquaintances, than those indicating PSA (M=2.26, SD=1.178) who on average had a slightly greater preference for audiences of acquaintances. The magnitude of the difference in the means (mean difference = 0.46, 95% CI: 0.038 to 0.868) was small (eta squared = 0.025) (see Table 8.6).

Table 8.6 Independent T-test assessing for any difference in audience preference between students with PSA and those without according to the pre-intervention administration of the PRCA-24 questionnaire

	Non-PSA	**PSA**	
Mean	2.72	2.26	
N	148	38	
SD	0.955	1.178	
SE Mean	0.079	0.191	
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F-value	4.156
		Significance	0.043
Equal variances not assumed			
t			2.193
df			50.176
Sig. (2-tailed)			0.33
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			0.038 to 0.868
eta squared			0.025

The students whose comments are included in the analysis reflected this general preference for an audience of acquaintances. Of the 23 students included in this part of the study, 21 responded to the question, eleven expressing a preference for an audience of acquaintances (7 a strong preference and 4 a slight preference), 5 said it made no difference to them and 5 preferred an audience of strangers (1 a strong preference and 4 a slight preference) (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Preferences for Audience of Acquaintances or Strangers



The structure of the presentation audiences changed between 2015/16 and 2016/17. This was for practical reasons and was therefore not a pedagogical decision. The nature of the audiences is shown in Table 8.7.

Table 8.7 Presentation Audiences

	1st Presentation	2nd Presentation	3rd Presentation
2015/16	Own Tutor Group out of presenter vision	Another Tutor Group out of presenter vision	Another Tutor Group in presenter vision
2016/17	Own Tutor Group out of presenter vision	Own Tutor Group out of presenter vision	Own Tutor Group in presenter vision

As might be expected from a group of students apprehensive about delivering oral presentations, most comments made regarding audiences concerned the apprehension they were feeling. The causes mentioned were "first time presenting to an audience" (Doris); "the size of the audience" (Farah); a general aversion to presenting (Vince, Kelly and Nancy). A number of comments revealed that presenters were often not as apprehensive as had been anticipated. Ahmed was an example of such a student when he wrote, "I actually felt quite confident as I overcame my fears and spoke clearly to the audience". Both Dean and Ivy appreciated the peers being out of their vision, saying it contributed to their reduced apprehension. However, Nancy said that she was aware that the peers were there even though she did not look at them.

For the second presentation the 2015/16 cohort visited another tutor group to deliver their presentation while the 2016/17 group continued to deliver to their own tutor group. This difference was noticeable in the reflections written by each cohort. Five of the 2015/16 sample made specific reference to the nature of the audience while no one in the 2016/17 made specific reference to this. Anthony, Ivy and Roy all indicated that the audience being a group of peers with whom they were not familiar contributed to their apprehension. On the other hand, Dean and Doris both felt relief that the audience was not their own group.

For the final presentation the peers sit in eyeshot of the presenters. Nobody commented on this change and the only theme concerning audiences mentioned by more than one student concerned how they felt less apprehensive. Doris said she was less nervous about the prospect of presenting to an audience because she had practised in front of an AST and gained "a feel for what" she would say. Doris, while admitting that she continued to feel generally nervous about speaking in front of a group of unfamiliar people, said that she was getting used to the idea of "answering questions on the spot in front of an audience". Similarly, Nigel said that he continued to feel nervous but focussing on the nature of the message he needed to convey rather than what the audience might be thinking about him had helped reduce his levels of apprehension.

Others focussed on how they interacted with the audience as a sign of increasing confidence in delivering presentations. Molly stated,

> When delivering the presentation, I believe that I was quite confident and loud. I also made eye contact with the audience to make sure that they were engaged and understanding what I was saying. I believe that I have made progress from my first presentation.

The maintenance of the audience of acquaintances throughout the 2016/17 iteration of the module was not intentional but meant that most members of the cohort had one less factor to worry about. While there are sizable groups of apprehensive students who would prefer to present to an unfamiliar audience, they are outnumbered by those who prefer acquaintances. The policy of having the peers observe out of view for the first and second presentation was mentioned appreciatively by two but no one wrote that they were unnerved by having the peers in eyeshot for the final presentation. This may have been because by this final presentation many had become less concerned about the audience and had begun to focus other aspects of presenting.

There does not seem to be any firm conclusion that can be drawn concerning the nature of audiences and how features might be varied to support apprehensive presenters. A large majority of these apprehensive students prefer an audience of acquaintances but a sizable minority prefer strangers. A small number commented on the location of the peer audience members out of eyeshot but most did not mention this feature. However, the fact that by the final presentation few of the students mentioned the audience in their reflections suggests that by then many are becoming accustomed to presenting and some had taken advantage of opportunities to practise before smaller audiences in the weeks before. Furthermore, if the presentations took place without the peer audience, the opportunities for development through peer observation as an audience member and receiving peer feedback on presentations delivered would be lost.

8.2.4 Tutor Advice and Discussion

The nature of the tutor discussions with the students differed between 2015/16 and 2016/17. For the 2015/16 cohort there was time to have individual discussions with students about presentations and the apprehension they had towards them. However, due to the long-term illness of the module leader this was not possible for the 2016/17 cohort. Despite this difficulty, a small number of students requested discussions which took place outside of class.

A small number of comments concerning discussions with the tutors were made following the first presentation. Two students made reference to the point made in all the discussions, that a certain level of nerves was desirable in public speaking. They reported that this had changed how they felt about presenting (Nancy and Roy). Two students referred to the notion that the presentation should be seen as a communication event rather than a performance (Nancy and Anthony). One remaining comment noted how advice given by the tutor had been useful (Marwan).

Comments made following the second presentation referred back to the earlier discussions and identified a range of features that students had found useful. Anthony said that his conversation with the tutor had "helped enormously" in thinking about delivery and preparation and while continuing to feel apprehensive about presenting he sensed he had gained confidence in his ability to convey the topic. Marwan referred to advice from the tutor about having thorough knowledge of the topic and about breathing. Dean mentioned that he had successfully "utilised a few techniques" suggested by the tutor which had improved his confidence. Nigel said that implementing ideas suggested by the tutor had contributed to his improved confidence. He particularly noted the benefits gained from thinking that the audience was less interested in the quality of his delivery than the information conveyed and the thought that some nerves are beneficial when delivering a presentation.

As was mentioned in the previous section, a practice presentation delivered to one of the ASTs forms part of the preparation for the final presentation. The involvement of the ASTs in this activity was reflected in two comments by students following the final presentation. Both Doris and Farah mentioned that the practice activity had helped improve their confidence.

The one-to-one discussions with the apprehensive students, which only took place systematically with the 2015/16 cohort and then only before the first presentation, seem to have the potential to contribute towards self-efficacy for presenting. While all other features of the intervention were available to the whole cohort, the one-to-one discussions were only offered to students who indicate that they had PSA on the PRCA-24 questionnaire. Where students reported the discussions to be beneficial, no particular point seemed to be especially popular. This outcome reflects the complex nature of the causes of apprehension towards public speaking.

8.2.5 Topic Knowledge

Knowledge of the presentation topic was a theme mentioned increasingly as the module progressed. This might be expected due to the design of the presentations. While the first presentation requires little research, the final presentation requires the teams to present economics or business related topics which they have researched. However, the rise might also be as a result of regular reminders that students receive telling them that they should only present what they know and understand.

For the first presentation both Roy and Vince said that feeling confident about the topic helped ease the apprehension they felt towards the presentation. For the second presentation, Anthony said that while he remained nervous he "felt a sense of excitement that the group would be able to show off the work they had prepared". Ivy, Vince and Farah were also positive about what they had learned, saying that they knew the material well. Marwan explained that he now knew, following feedback from the

tutor, that it was important to know the topic well. Also, Dean accepted that this could be a factor specific to each presentation and that while he felt more confident because he "knew the information well", it might not always be the case. As well as the positive comments, Doris, Kelly and Roy noted that a lack of knowledge of the topic had contributed to their apprehension.

The final presentation resulted in many comments concerning topic knowledge. These did not always specifically mention diminished apprehension but often portrayed a highly positive tone. Nigel is an example of an individual who seemed focussed on ensuring he had investigated the content thoroughly and in reflecting discussed the reliability of sources. He even mentioned how he had some difficulty in finding suitable content and therefore changed the focus so that it was easier for him to discuss. Similarly, Anthony emphasised when reflecting that he knew what he was talking about, while Xenia described the process of research and focussed on the skills she was learning while at the same time learning her topic, concluding "I know what I am going to talk about". Danny explained that he had learned how important a deep knowledge of the topic was so that he "could recall the extra information required." Barry focussed on the quality of the presentation when saying, "I have learnt that if you believe in the material you are presenting then you are more likely to give a good presentation." A few students mentioned the link they saw between their confidence in the topic and their reduced apprehension. Vince stated he had made sure that the content was relevant which meant that it "related to the topic" and "that the presentation was of high quality and was delivered confidently". Bernice was clear in her conclusion that a main factor contributing to her "lower stress levels" was her knowledge of the topic which was developed through conducting "research in advance" and "reading around the subject". Gloria spoke of the pride that she felt having conducted enough research that she knew what she needed to talk about and was therefore not hesitant during the presentation. Finally, Derek said that although he remained nervous, his thorough research of the topic had helped with his understanding and that this had helped reduce his stress. The

only negative comment regarding knowledge of the topic among the group came from Kelly. She supported its importance when she said that she did not feel that the team had managed to carry out enough research. She explained that this meant they had not had time practised in front of an AST as other groups had.

The comments made about the importance of topic knowledge support its importance in helping reduce apprehension towards delivering presentations. This also suggests that confidence can change from presentation to presentation depending on how well the individual knows the topic being presented. While this was identified as a theme in its own right, most of the comments were a product of thorough preparation and therefore much of the topic knowledge developed as self-efficacy developed. This again supports the development of learning through the content dimension and incentive dimension.

8.2.6 Use of Literature

Using literature as a means to help students reflect and learn from their experiences is suggested by Dennick (2014) while in an American context Pearson, DeWitt, Child, Kahl, Jr., and Dandamudi (2007, p.159) claim that "students learn about communication apprehension largely through the texts they use" and that as a result the most popular texts influence student perceptions of CA. In the American context "Public speaking courses are required or recommended" and as a result texts on public speaking are used on many courses (Pearson et al., 2007, pp.159-160). In British HE such an approach is not the norm and skills are more likely to be promoted through the broader curriculum or as in the current case through a single module within the discipline. In the module under consideration the use of literature when writing is promoted, with the main motive of encouraging the students to support ideas with evidence from literature; they are not specifically instructed to access literature relating to public speaking or CA. However, the evidence indicates that some of the students have indeed made use of relevant literature to support their comments with thirteen of the twenty-three students using literature

when reflecting on presentation activities. Of these thirteen, five used literature when reflecting on just one of the presentations, five when reflecting on two presentations and three when reflecting on all three presentations.

Reflecting on the first presentation many students used literature to support points they wanted to make about teamwork. In some cases this supported positive examples, such as Gloria who focussed on how team members can help each other, and Kelly who described what she felt had helped her team work together. However, in other examples (Barry & Farah) literature was used to reflect on why the teamwork had not functioned well. There were examples of students (Barry & Derek) considering the qualities of good presentations and three examples of students supporting points about PSA with Rob discussing how he felt stress had interfered with his "train of thought" and caused him to "mess up", Donna emphasising the importance of tolerance of stress and Bernice using the website 'Skills You Need' when making the point that "It is entirely natural to feel nervous before making a presentation" (SkillsYouNeed, 2017). She then linked this to a discussion of how she may need to focus on enhancing her tolerance of stress as much as trying to reduce her apprehension if she is to make progress with presentations.

The reflections on the second presentation followed a similar pattern to the first when supporting points with literature. Gloria, Barry and Rahema mentioned how team members can learn from each other while Rob wrote about the success of his team. Bernice and Donna focussed on skills that were being developed during the projects and Barry used literature to support how, on reflection, for the final presentation his team needed to practice much more, writing "nothing replaces the polish and professionalism of a well-prepared, well-rehearsed presentation" (Linowes, 1998, p.16). Explaining the research he conducted into the preparation of presentations, Nigel said that he particularly referred to Altman (2014) who says that repeated practice is "one of the only proven methods of alleviating fears". As a result, Nigel used this knowledge and with the support of his group, who acted as his audience, he practised in front of them for almost three hours. Finally, two students mentioned literature by discussing PSA directly. Doris

said how she realised that she needed to think differently about presentations; "public speaking anxiety will be lessened if highly anxious speakers change their attitude or orientation to the speaking opportunity" (McCarthy & Hatcher, 2013, p.3), a sentiment which may have also been influenced by her discussion with the tutor. Marwan explained that he had taken the advice of Mandel (2000) who emphasised the importance of practice.

The reflection on the final presentation shifted from the use of literature to support the teamwork aspect of the presentation towards support for points related to PSA. Two students (Barry & Derek) supported points made about teamwork but the remaining six students used literature to support points related to PSA. Nigel discussed growing confidence; Bernice cited Macan, Shahani, Dipboye and Phillips (1990) when discussing how better time management can reduce stress; Farah mentioned advice given by Cottrell (2015) for students who panic during presentations; Rahema wrote about the importance of practice; Molly supported a point she made concerning PSA, saying she needed to work on presentations because "Oral presentation is one of the most important transversal competences" (Galván-Sánchez, Verano-Tacoronte, González-Betancor, Fernández-Monroy, & Bolívar-Cruz, 2017, p.17). Finally, Laura noted how following her research into how she might reduce her levels of apprehension towards presenting, she read that practising in front of a mirror was a useful technique; she did not say if she took this advice.

It is not clear if the ideas of supporting these points in their reflections were extrinsic in that the students were complying with the requirement to cite and were ensuring they met grading criteria or if the use of literature was intrinsically part of their trying to learn. However, even when the motivation was extrinsic, the fact that students have taken the time to find relevant support shows that they are engaging in the topic and some learning may be taking place. Even when the support does not relate directly to PSA then this may support developing confidence, suggesting these students may have moved on from concern over apprehension to consider other aspects of presentations

such as skills. This may make a contribution to developing self-efficacy in those who are able to link what they read in the texts to their own experiences.

8.2.7 Tolerance of Stress

There are probably two main reasons why tolerance of stress as a theme is commonly mentioned in the student reflections, particularly when discussing presentations. When the students reflect they choose from a list of 'employability competencies' taken from Rees et al. (2007). Amongst the list of competencies is Tolerance of Stress, described as "Maintains performance under pressure and/or opposition" (Rees et al., 2007. p.143). In addition, in the discussions with the tutor, emphasis is placed on the idea that they should not be aiming to eliminate nerves completely. This may encourage some to consider how they would cope and therefore reflect on tolerance of stress.

Few students mentioned tolerance of stress when reflecting on the first presentation. Bernice felt she had a low tolerance of stress and Donna felt that it was an area in which she had developed. Kelly's case was more complex in that while she felt she needed to improve, she saw it as a consequence of problems with her team as well as presenting.

For the second presentation Doris noted that she had not become as stressed as she had expected for the first presentation so she was more confident when it came to the second presentation. Bernice continued to maintain that her tolerance of stress was low. Derek explained that it was an area in which he had improved, partly due to the meeting he had with the tutor. Finally, Rahema noted that her tolerance of stress was tested because of the range of work that she needed to complete across her studies which meant that the time to prepare the project was limited.

The reflection conducted following the final presentation produced many more references to tolerance of stress with eleven students referring to it. Doris believed that the opportunities that the module provided to deliver a number of presentations had helped her develop her tolerance of stress, "although I was nervous I was still able to do the

presentation well". Vince recognised that he continued to feel nervous about presenting but recognised that he was now better able to cope with the nerves. Bernice continued to reflect on tolerance of stress but by this final presentation she was clearer about what she might do to increase it, discussing how she needed a focus on preparation and time management. Donna explained that by the end of the module she had a better understanding of how to tolerate stress. Xenia said she was able to move on from thinking about stress despite recognising her continued apprehension. She explained, "I am not confident in myself during presentations and team working, however I tried to develop my skills and now I have more tolerance of stress and can focus on more important things than stress." Kelly wrote that she recognises that tolerance of stress along with her time management and planning were areas that she needed to develop and that she needed to ensure in the future that she would "start on the presentation as soon as it is set and do sufficient research", meaning that she would "have enough time to practice" and therefore feel "more prepared and less nervous about presenting".

This evidence concerning the students' tolerance of stress shows that in a number of cases the students have been able to focus away from apprehension, having learned more about how they should deal with the stress they experience. In some other cases where students continue to struggle with their apprehension, there is evidence that that they see it as an important area to address.

8.2.8 The Process of Three Presentations in the Module

Reflection on the design of the module and specifically on the progression of projects which culminated in presentations was a theme which was important. This first occurred following the second presentation but was mainly evident in reflections following the final presentation. Following the second presentation Marwan said that he saw that the module was key in developing skills related to presenting and Danny commented that he could see himself making progress from the first to the second presentation. Meanwhile,

Ahmed, Dean and Nigel all said that the experience they were gaining at presenting contributed to their improving confidence. However, it was following the third presentation that many students reflected on how the design had benefited them. Ahmed said the regular written reflections, feedback from others and regular presentation projects had benefited him greatly, "thanks to the multiple presentations we were required to present in front of audiences, I now feel much more confident". Doris said that as each project passed she grew in confidence and found that working in teams encouraged her to communicate. Ivy supported the general approach taken in the module when saying, "AIO has definitely made me a more confident person". Rob reflected that the module had been essential in making him face presenting. He explained that hitherto he would avoid subjects that would require presentations, saying,

> I believe that the practice of the two presentations beforehand allowed me to gain experience and familiarise myself with the emotional state I put myself in when performing. This allowed me to be more tolerant to stress in my final presentation and overall become … more confident in tackling stressful situations.

Bernice explained that by carrying out the projects over the course of the module helped her to realise how important it is to manage her stress in such situations. Despite continuing to feel apprehensive she felt the module had helped her understand what she would need to do to improve. Derek, Donna and Kelly noted that over the course of the module they had gained confidence towards both presenting and teamwork with Donna saying, "to see this improvement is phenomenal" and she went on to say "each time I have presented my nerves and anxiety are getting less". Finally, Gloria said that the module was "one of the most important subjects" for her. She explained that she had been extremely shy before attending university and that the module had helped her develop in many ways because, as she said, "as the year went along I did a number of presentations in AIO and it helped me to become a better individual while improving many competencies". As with many of the other students she particularly focussed on

how her teamwork and presenting had developed to the extent that she "really enjoyed the final presentation."

The comments about the overall progression of the three presentations support the general design and reinforce the commitment to group work which enables some students, such as Derek, Donna, Kelly and Gloria to make noticeable progress in team working and presenting. This in turn adds support to the framework proposed by van Ginkel et al. (2015, p.70) and is in line with the notion promoted by Arquero et al. (2016) and Roberts (2017) that the presentations should be designed so that they progress from simple tasks to more complex ones.

8.2.9 Novelty

PSA based on the novelty of the experience is mentioned by a number of authors, including Buss (1980), Pribyl et al. (2001) and Finn (2007). There is evidence from the reflections that this is the case for a small number of the students. The most dramatic example of this is Dave. Dave, who had scored 29/30 on the PRCA-24 gave a graphic description of his apprehension with regard to oral presentations prior to the module saying,

> I have spoken in front of audiences a handful of times. Each time I struggle to get the words out of my mouth, they seem to get stuck in my throat. My leg tremors or feels completely rigid and on occasions my tongue feels like a dead weight in my mouth.

Despite the indications of PSA, Dave found that he was calm when the presentation started and when it came to his turn he "was even calmer still". Following the presentation, he reflected with pride on the experience saying, "This was genuinely the first presentation that I did not feel sick … I can … speak publicly without feeling overly nervous to a crippling degree". He attributed the stark differences in his feelings towards presentations to the considerable amount of time that had elapsed between his previous

presentations and his first delivered at university, suggesting that it felt like a completely different experience. Ivy also gave indications in her reflection on the first presentation that she did not find the first presentation as daunting as she had anticipated. As was the case with Dave, she scored 29/30 on the PRCA-24 questionnaire. Whereas, Ivy had previously talked about becoming overwhelmed and panicky and had said, "I'm very worried about the presentation as I think my mind will go blank", she concluded in her reflection on the first presentation that she was not as nervous as she had expected. She admitted to feeling nervous beforehand but that the nerves diminished when the presentation was underway and disappeared once she was presenting her part.

These were the only examples of the students clearly experiencing much lower apprehension than had been anticipated. It is notable that in Dave's case he did not reflect on presentations at all following the first presentation which indicates that he may felt there were other skills which he should focus on developing.

8.2.10 Features of a Good Presentation

Another theme to derive from the qualitative data was the students' developing knowledge of the features of a good presentation. Reference to this increased from just two students after the first presentation, to four after the second and nine following the final presentation. When students mentioned this they often wrote about a few features at the same time. The most commonly mentioned feature was eye contact which was mentioned seven times (Bernice twice, Anthony, Farah, Molly, Nancy & Xenia). The importance of the voice was emphasised with loud voice mentioned six times (Bernice twice, Farah twice, Gloria & Xenia) and clear voice mentioned five times (Bernice twice, Derek, Gloria & Nigel). The practice of speaking extemporaneously rather than by reading from a script or over relying on notes was mentioned five times (Anthony, Barry, Farah, Gloria & Marwan). Ensuring that the pace of delivery is not too fast was mentioned three times (Barry, Derek & Nancy), supporting visuals (Anthony & Derek),

body language (Farah & Xenia) and hand gestures (Anthony & Nancy) were mentioned twice each, while there was a single mention for engaging with the audience (Bernice) and dressing smartly (Xenia).

These examples suggest that many students increasingly thought about how to ensure the presentation was a good one; suggesting the focus is on learning in the content dimension.

8.2.11 High Stakes

The importance of the final presentation in terms of its summative value was reported as a cause of increased apprehension by five students. Doris stated that its importance was the source of her nerves in the final presentation and Rahema stated that she was nervous because as it was so important she did not want to make a mistake. Dean and Xenia felt that the importance added to nerves that they already felt, while Danny saw the presentation as "nerve racking" because he had put so much effort into the exercise, seeing it as "the final test … a test of how far I had come … instead of a test of whether I could do it or not".

The high stakes nature of the final presentation is only a small factor in this case. This seems to support the use of a progression of presentations and is a reason supported by Arquero et al. (2016) and Roberts (2017). Neither the first nor the second presentations were high stakes. Had the students not had the two formative presentations during the year, it is quite possible that the combination of the PSA and nerves due to the weight that the presentation carries in assessment would have been overwhelming for some.

8.3 Students Indicating Public Speaking Anxiety Post-intervention

Having considered the themes that developed from the reflections and comments from the 23 students who were highly apprehensive prior to the intervention, the study now moves to consider evidence from five students who, according to the PRCA-24 questionnaire experienced PSA following the intervention. The evidence from those who indicated that they were apprehensive at the thought of delivering oral presentations suggests that many are able to take advantage of the course in order to improve both their skills and confidence in the area. This, however, is not the case for all; some individuals indicated levels of apprehension below those associated with PSA during the initial administration of the PRCA-24 but when completing the PRCA-24 at the end of the course indicated that they had developed a heightened level of apprehension consistent with PSA. For the 2015/16 and 2016/17 cohorts five participating students who in the first iteration of the PRCA-24 scored less than 25/30 on the public speaking section of the PRCA-24, later at the end of the module, scored 25/30 or more. The mean score of the five students on the first iteration of the PRCA-24 questionnaire was 20.2 and following the intervention the mean score had risen to 26.2 (see Table 8.8). The reflections of these students are now considered in turn.

Table 8.8 Scores on the Public Speaking Sub-section of the PRCA-24

Name (Cohort)	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Change
Lee (2015/16)	18	28	+10
Rizwan (2016/17)	19	25	+6
Jane (2015/16)	19	25	+6
Zain (2016/17)	21	26	+5
Nancy (2015/16)	24	27	+3
Mean	**20.2**	**26.2**	**+6**

8.3.1 Lee

Prior to the course Lee had written that he had no experience of speaking to audiences but indicated in the PRCA-24 public speaking subsection that he was not particularly apprehensive with 18/30 being below the average (20.11/30) for all students surveyed. Reflecting on the first presentation, Lee felt the activity went well. He emphasised how teamwork had been a vital component of successful planning and delivery. Despite the success he reports, he commented that he felt he "was the weakest member of the team." This is an early indication that he is comparing himself with his peers and feeling that he is not confident that he has contributed to the same level as his peers. He concluded by identifying effort as the area that might help him to improve, concluding that he could have "pushed a bit more to help". He then reflected on the need to practise more often so that the presentation would have been better.

Prior to the second presentation Lee explained that he was "feeling quite apprehensive" because he was "still not confident with presenting in front of people." However, he was clear in his determination saying that the "only way to get over this, is to get stuck in and do it". He then he finished less promisingly by saying, "Hopefully I will not struggle as much as I am anticipating." Lee did not provide a comprehensive reflection following the second presentation. However, he was clearly disappointed with the outcome and again bemoaned the lack of practice as well as feeling that he should have learned the material better, saying "I don't think it is that difficult to learn stuff like that."

The reflection on the final presentation showed that the lack of preparation and practice that Lee had spoken about before was now a problem for the whole group. He reported that they did not meet up to carry out a full practice at all and that they "were unable to properly finish the slides." He explained that they met early on the day of the presentation in order to go "through it quickly just to get it right." He was however "more nervous than the previous presentation". He reasoned that this was due to "the difficulty of the subject"; he had already mentioned that they had underestimated the complexity of the topic. When the presentation was underway he knew that he was very

nervous. This resulted in one of his colleagues taking over as Lee found that he was tripping over his words.

Lee's team for the final presentation clearly did not function well. He was in fact in the same team as Roy who had identified poor planning and preparation of the group as a major cause of his apprehension for the final presentation. Lee concluded by saying, "I have learned that working on a presentation and practicing beforehand is the best thing to do when your confidence is not very high … at the thought of presenting." Despite these remarks suggesting Lee is aware of what he could do to give himself the best opportunity of reducing his PSA, his post-intervention score on the public speaking subsection of the PRCA-24 was one of the highest amongst his cohort at 28/30.

8.3.2 Jane

Jane had an initial score on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 of 19/30. In her initial comments she explained that when focussed on the aim of the presentation and with "extensive preparation" she becomes confident and is able to enjoy the activity. She said that she still needed to manage her nerves "before and during the actual presentation" otherwise it affects her performance.

In her first reflection Jane described a positive scenario with her group meeting three times to prepare and practice the presentation. She described the actual presentation as going well and expressed that she was pleased with the presentation. She then focussed on the teamwork in more detail as she explained that the individuals she was with "were very committed to producing a good quality presentation" and that her varied experiences of working in teams before had helped her appreciate the importance of ensuring a "reliable, friendly and hardworking" attitude, in order "to produce the best result". She explained that she felt some apprehension at the thought that the project was ending in a presentation but was focussed on the preparation which she really enjoyed. She added that she was spurred by the thought that she might become anxious

if she did not prepare well. Despite this, she felt that she had become somewhat stressed and that this had impacted on her performance. This feeling only first transpired on the day prior to the presentation as thoughts "of standing up and speaking in front of people" began to go through her mind. She explained, "Even though I knew exactly what I had to say and had practised, I still wasn't able to control the nerves and mainly read off my paper, to relax myself."

Before the second presentation Jane was excited to be presenting again but admitted to being a little apprehensive due to the complexity of the material the group had to present. She was also a little concerned that she was in a group with peers she did not know very well. She felt that this might be an opportunity for her to learn to develop working relations quickly with others. In fact, in reflecting on the presentation she explained that she had become group leader. She explained that as a natural leader had not emerged she decided to take herself out of her "comfort zone". The result was encouraging as she explained in her reflection, "now I feel a lot more confident in voicing my opinions and also taking the lead in situations when I think someone needs to." Her reflections on this project were entirely focussed on the preparation with no reference to the presentation itself.

For the final presentation Jane began by reflecting on the choice of topic and how pleased she was as it was a subject she felt passionately about. She explained that she "realised that planning and being organised would be an important factor behind how successful the final presentation would be" and she thought that this would be a strength. She even emphasised this by supporting the point; "Good preparation and planning are essential for successful presentations" (Chivers & Shoolbred, 2007). Jane explained that as the experience of the previous presentation had been positive and she was with the same team, they decided to go through similar processes. She then explained that

> [t]he most helpful aspect of the preparation was our appointment with the Learning Development Group. We were able to practise our complete presentation

> in front of one of the tutors who then gave us feedback and suggestions that in my eyes helped improve our presentation dramatically.

She concluded that the preparation was a "pleasing and valuable experience" and that it had contributed to her improved presentation skills.

When reflecting on the presentation delivery she was generally positive but noted that she has always had an issue with controlling her nerves before a presentation. She was generally pleased with how the presentation had gone but noted that some of the feedback said that she was not making eye contact with the audience. She concluded that it was something she needed to work on.

In reflecting on her progress over the year Jane was clear in reflecting on progress made with her developing confidence and skills

> I knew if I was to improve as an individual in presenting I needed to feel more prepared and confident ... I feel as the presentations continued I definitely improved and by the last one, I had no notes and was pleased with my confident passionate performance.

Furthermore, she linked her improved time management and personal organisation in general to the group's production of "high quality presentations" and her reduced apprehension. This led her to discussing her tolerance of stress. She explained that she had previously allowed herself to be overcome by the pressure of delivering a great presentation which had resulted in her not giving the performance she had planned. She determined that her main goal would be "to become a less stressed person" in her studies and she uses presentations as her main example. She explains that for the final presentation she focussed on developing a high quality presentation on a topic she was passionate about and put the high stakes nature of the exercise to the back of her mind.

Jane's comments do not seem to reflect an individual who is highly apprehensive about presenting; however her comment concerning her nerves in anticipation of the

presentation may explain her high score on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 at the end of the module.

In concluding she wrote

> I have learnt that when I focus on the overall aim of the presentation and become extremely confident in the topic we are presenting on, through extensive preparation I actually enjoy presenting to a large group of people. I still need to control my nerves before and during the actual presentation because this can impact on my performance and I end up letting myself down.

8.3.3 Rizwan

Rizwan's initial comments suggested he might be apprehensive about presenting despite only scoring 19/30 in the Public Speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24 "I haven't had very much experience of presenting in front of an audience. But I know that I can be nervous in these situations".

Following the first presentation he felt that any nerves that he had were initially related to confusion over the task requirements both in terms of content and structure. However, he strongly believed that the regular group meetings helped greatly in ensuring that the group knew what was required. This included practising a number of times which raised his confidence. He also emphasised that he "became more confident after meeting with the group as they helped" him understand the topic. Despite the increased confidence he was "nervous before the presentation" as he was concerned that he would forget what to say. The nerves built as his turn approached but he was pleased with his role. He explained that he felt he would continue to be nervous in anticipation of delivering presentations but that the "fear of the unknown" would not be present. He also felt that the nerves he experienced during the presentation would diminish as he became more experienced at presenting.

Prior to the second presentation Rizwan claimed to be more confident but was worried about some of the content. However, following the presentation he focussed on how nervous he had been during the presentation. He thought that this might be because he put pressure on himself because he was keen to do well and also because he was worried about embarrassing himself in front of the audience. As in the first presentation he felt the nerves build during the presentation before it was his turn. He wondered if he should therefore focus on his tolerance of stress. When focussing specifically on the presentation he said his nerves made him "blank" initially but having "paused for a second" he remembered what he wanted to say and he continue with confidence throughout the rest of the presentation. Rizwan took comfort from the knowledge that others in his group who seemed confident actually felt the same.

Reflecting on the final presentation, Rizwan felt confident mostly as a result of his group's excellent teamwork. They met on eight occasions for about two hours to plan, prepare and practise. He professed to being a great deal less nervous during the final presentation when compared with the previous ones. He felt fully prepared and said that he delivered his section with confidence due to his preparation and interest in the topic. He added that despite his increased confidence he still felt a degree of nerves but that his "tolerance of stress has improved" which meant that he was better able to deal with the nerves. He concluded by saying, "Overall, I feel as though I have improved with regards to presenting. At first I was very nervous, however after presenting a few times, you start to get used to it".

Rizwan's comments seem to contrast with the evidence provided by the PRCA-24, thus supporting the notion that how individuals interpret apprehension can vary greatly and that in order to gain a fuller understanding into apprehension, the PRCA-24 questionnaire should be accompanied by insights into experiences of presenting.

8.3.4 Zain

Zain had irregular attendance through the year and as a result there is less evidence available. His initial score on the public speaking element of the PRCA-24 was above average at 21/30 and he indicated that he might be apprehensive in his initial comments.

> I have given speeches in classes but I was not too confident in doing this. It all depends on what I'm delivering to the audience. When I'm doing a speech in front of my friends then it's easier, but when it comes to speaking in front of strangers, I feel more tense as I have tendency to forget about the things I want to say. However I feel that in time I will be able to improve that skill and face my fears.

Despite these comments his reflection on the first presentation did not convey the same level of apprehension. While he said that he was relieved that the project was over he commented that the group prepared well, knew what they needed to do and were all happy with the roles they were taking on for the presentation.

For the second presentation Zain said he was feeling nervous but when the presentation started he felt more confident and at ease. In his reflection his increased nerves seem to be as a result of low engagement in the activity, "I need to be on task next time with the presentation and make sure I am putting the right effort and work in throughout the event so that I am not letting my team down".

His only comment following the final presentation indicated that he saw the presentations as daunting tasks which had to be endured, "I have learnt that class presentation can be very tense and stressful but you need to stay relaxed and calm in order to get through it well and once it is over and done with there is a big relief like a weight off your shoulder".

8.3.5 Nancy

Nancy's apprehension towards presenting was not helped by being in a group in which she felt the attitude of some team members did not meet her high expectations. Since she always wanted to do well, she was concerned that issues with group dynamics would cause her greater worry. She supported these concerns when explaining that she felt the preparation was below her expectations, resulting in her feeling "stressed and worked up". She did feel somewhat reassured by a one-to-one meeting with the AST which challenged her perception of presenting by suggesting that some nerves are good for presenters. However, the experience of presenting was not good; she felt "absolutely terrified." She reported losing track, tripping over words and ending the experience feeling more apprehensive than before. She was clear that the lack of preparation was a major factor in causing her to be nervous.

Nancy was again concerned with her group for the second presentation which made her "a little on edge". She cited the poorly organised meetings often arranged at short notice to illustrate her concern. She was clear now in her belief that preparation was key and would be vital in her being able to develop her confidence towards presenting. She detailed how a group meeting was cancelled and that she felt that this then had a knock on effect on progress. The result was that Nancy was not completely confident in what she had to say and delivered her part of the presentation by reading from a script. She spent much of her reflection detailing why she should not have done this. Furthermore, she was clearly concerned about how she appeared to the audience, saying

> I tried much harder this time to be confident in front of an audience and remember that it would only last for a few minutes and then it would be over. It is only small progress but felt like a big step to me.

Despite her continued apprehension, she particularly emphasised how the social aspects of the course had helped her to increase her confidence in general and that this has helped her with presenting.

Preparation was again a concern for Nancy in the final presentation. She cited procrastination as the main problem leading to the group preparing later than she had hoped. She felt that she had been able to develop many aspects of what makes a good presentation; "speaking slowly and clearly, giving eye contact to my audience and trying to use some hand gestures". She did however wonder if she had low tolerance of stress and felt that it was an area she might need to focus upon in the future. This is because on the day of the presentation she allowed herself "to get very worked up from thinking about speaking in front of an audience of" unfamiliar people.

In concluding what she felt she had learned from the year, Nancy said that she was "gradually learning to find ways to adjust to the nerves of presenting in front of new people." She continued to feel apprehensive about presenting but was clear in her belief that practice is a key factor in ensuring success.

8.3.6 Discussion

In the cases of Rizwan and Jane the PRCA-24 scores following the course and their comments show that students might indicate high PSA for quite different reasons. In both these examples the accompanying comments indicate that there may not be any reason for concern. They are aware that they become apprehensive and despite the high score on the PRCA-24 are happy that they have made progress in presenting. Notably, both mention that their improved tolerance of stress enabled them to cope with the apprehension they felt concerning presentations.

In the cases of Nancy, Lee and Zain the comments made by the students are compatible with the high scores on the PRCA-24. However, the comments indicate that these outcomes may be for quite different reasons. Both Nancy and Lee are clear that preparation is the key to ensuring their presentations are a success. In Lee's case he gives a strong indication that he is aware of what he needs to do to ensure a successful outcome but particularly in the final presentation the preparation was inadequate. He

conveys a sense of frustration in his reflections in that he has not been able to take the necessary steps to prepare adequately. This does not seem to have been helped by another member having high PSA and no member of the group being a particularly confident presenter. The lack of a strong leader may have further added to the difficulties the team experienced. While Lee sees the problems of preparation as a group responsibility for the final presentation, Nancy sees the problems as a group issue throughout all three projects. In contrast to Nancy and Lee, Zain conveys a low level of engagement, providing very few reflective comments. In the comments that he does make he writes about the need for effort with no clear indication of what practical steps he could take.

From these few examples of students who have indicated through the PRCA-24 questionnaire that they became more apprehensive with presenting over the course of the intervention, factors which seem to be important are the composition of the teams, the importance of being adequately prepared for the presentation and the possibility that being able to tolerate stress might be as important as reducing apprehension.

8.4 Summary

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates the complexity of developing skills and gaining confidence in delivering oral presentations. Whereas Dave, who had been extremely apprehensive prior to the first presentation, found that he was not as apprehensive as he had anticipated and thereafter rarely mentioned presentations in his reflections, others, such as Nancy found presenting a difficult experience for much of the year and recorded a higher PRCA-24 score at the end of the module than at the beginning.

Much of the qualitative evidence provided through the reflections and discussions supports evidence shown in Table 8.3 that generally the students focus more on the presentation and how to ensure it is good rather than their apprehension towards it as

the module moves forward. Positive comments about features of good presentations and tolerance of stress dominate the comments on the final presentation while comments made which are generally negative occur more frequently following the first presentation than the final presentation.

Danny, who had the highest fall of any of the apprehensive students in his score on the public speaking sub-section of the PRCA-24 mentioned preparation, topic knowledge and positive teamwork as contributing to his development but even he saw the final presentation as "nerve racking" due to its importance as a summative assessment exercise. The evidence suggests that it is likely that various features of the projects might be useful but that a consistent pattern which would ensure reduced apprehension for all is unlikely and that the progress might be uneven. Ivy reflected positively throughout, saying that she had not been as nervous as expected after the first presentation and speaking positively about the group context. However, she reported greater apprehension when reflecting on the final presentation and blamed this on the group context.

This evidence supports Finn's (2007) conclusion that a multifaceted approach is likely to yield the greatest benefit for highly apprehensive presenters, providing them with more resources and opportunities to develop confidence, tolerance of stress and skills. However, with the large number of variables to consider, gains made by students who have had a positive experience when presenting can easily be eroded by later negative experiences.

Chapter 9: Discussion

Having presented the results and analysis of this case study, the focus now turns to the aims of the study and the specific research questions. This chapter considers each aim and specific research question in turn.

9.1 Levels of PSA During the Intervention

The first aim of the study is to map changes in PSA exhibited by students during the six-month period of a multifaceted intervention aimed at reducing PSA and developing oral presentation skills. For this aim there are two research questions which are now discussed.

9.1.1 Changes in PSA During the Intervention

The first research question is, 'How does Public Speaking Anxiety as measured on the public speaking sub-scale of the PRCA-24 questionnaire alter during a six-month programme of presentation activities? When considering how PSA alters over the course of the intervention, the analysis of the PRCA-24 data has indicated that general levels of apprehension experienced by the students towards presenting decreases on average over the period of the intervention both for the cohorts as a whole and for those who report high PSA at the beginning of the module. However, in the absence of a control group, other factors outside of the intervention, such as maturation, cannot be discounted as contributing reasons for the decrease in this score. For those students who have a score which initially indicates that they experience high levels of PSA both mean and median fall to medium levels of apprehension. Despite this finding, forty of the 465 participants indicate that they are highly apprehensive towards public speaking after the

intervention. Of these, twenty indicate that they remain highly apprehensive following the intervention and another twenty that they become highly apprehensive having not indicated high apprehension initially.

9.1.2 The PRCA-24 Questionnaire Results Compared with Previous Studies

The second research question is, 'To what extent are the results of the PRCA-24 questionnaire administered in this study consistent with its use in previous studies?' The results of the PRCA-24 questionnaire administered in this study are broadly consistent with results obtained in previous research into OCA in a public speaking context. When compared with previous studies the results of all ten administrations conducted for this study fall within the range of the results produced by previous studies (see Appendix 8). The public speaking results of the five pre-intervention administrations of the questionnaire are towards the top of the range while the five post-intervention administrations are towards the foot of the range. Furthermore, both administrations of the PRCA-24 showed average PSA amongst the female students, consistent with most previous studies, to be higher than the male average. Despite this finding concerning gender, no causation between gender and apprehension is implied. While the purpose of the current study is not to explore the reasons for such findings, studies should continue to report such findings so that gender differences can be monitored as society evolves.

9.2 Influences on Levels of PSA

The second aim of the study is to identify factors which might influence levels of PSA amongst year one accounting students. For this aim there is one research question.

9.2.1 Factors Contributing to Levels of PSA

The third research question is, 'What factors appear to contribute to the degree of PSA experienced by accounting students prior to studying at University?' The analysis of data from the 2015/16 cohort comparing PRCA-24 responses and accompanying comments about experiences of presenting supports the consistency of the responses with significant differences found between five pairs of comparisons which included the comparisons between those who felt positive towards presentations, those with negative feelings towards presentations, which was almost entirely concerned with apprehension, and those whose comments indicated that they had previously overcome feelings of apprehension towards presentations.

The evidence from those indicating they had overcome their aversion towards presentations generally suggested that previous experience was a key factor in helping them gain confidence in delivering presentations. This was broadly derived from two sources. For some this arose from realising that their nerves generally reduced once a presentation had begun. For others this experience was as a result of having delivered a number of presentations. For those students who wrote about their high levels of apprehension in anticipation of a presentation or during a presentation, the two main concerns mentioned were various aspects of the audience and a fear of making errors. Finally, for those whose comments were entirely positive, the most common sources of confidence were knowledge of the topic being presented and adequate levels of preparation. The finding from those who were entirely positive and those who wrote about overcoming apprehension towards presenting reflect much of the previous research by Finn (2007), Morreale (2010) and Byrne et al. (2012) concerning the importance of preparation and practice.

9.3 Factors Supporting the Presentation Skills Development of Students Exhibiting PSA

The third aim of the study is to ascertain which features of the intervention support the presentation skills development of those students exhibiting PSA. When investigating the features of the intervention for this aim, evidence from the reflections and comments made by apprehensive students from the final two cohorts were analysed along with their responses to some questions concerning peer observation and feedback. For this aim there are two research questions.

9.3.1 Features of the Intervention that Help Students

The fourth research question was, 'What features of the intervention do students identify as either contributing to the development of their presentation skills or any reduction in PSA?' In considering the question of which features of the intervention students identify as either contributing to the development of their presentation skills or any reduction in PSA, the evidence supports the notion that much of what helps students reduce apprehension towards public speaking also helps the development of presentation skills. In the study much of this occurs in a social context since the activities are group work. While there is some reference to features that do not involve peers, the majority of references involve others. However, despite evidence supporting reduced apprehension there is also evidence of increased apprehension which may be partly caused by the social nature of the projects. Many features of the intervention which were not classed as group work did nonetheless often involve peers. 'Peer observation', 'Feedback' and 'Audience' were all themes which involved peers and which were reported by participants as impacting on levels of apprehension and skills development.

The comments classified in the theme 'Peer observation' often demonstrated how watching fellow students provided support to the observer in nurturing the development

of both skills and confidence, although the specific ways in which the students claimed peer observation helped them were wide ranging with, in some cases, the focus clearly being on the apprehension and in other cases the focus being on skills. In some instances, students sensed that they had benefitted from observing but were not sure how they had benefitted. This supports the principle of the behavioural modelling suggested by van Ginkel et al. (2015, p.70) as supporting the raising of self-efficacy, which is discussed in more detail in the next section, and developing skills of public speaking.

In contrast to the comments about peer observation, the student comments about feedback suggest that they were more likely to see the feedback as supporting the development of their presentation skills when compared with the development of their confidence towards delivering presentations. Furthermore, feedback from the tutor was generally valued more than feedback from peers with a few students seeing peer feedback as lacking validity. Despite this, most comments from the participants appear to value the feedback provided by peers in the audience. These findings support van Ginkel et al.'s (2015, p.72) design principles relating to feedback and peer assessment.

An important point to emerge from the comments about feedback was that the feedback for one student, Dean, impacted positively on the conspicuousness he was feeling. His comments suggest that it was a combination of tutor and peer feedback which convinced him that the audience did not notice his nerves. While Dean was the only participant to mention this point, it suggests that the feedback process and inclusion of both tutor and peer feedback is worth exploring as a means by which Savitsky and Gilovich's (2003) illusion of transparency can be highlighted to those experiencing feelings of conspicuousness.

Without the audience there would be no peer observation nor peer feedback. As might be expected, the theme of Audience impacted on apprehension and this was generally negative initially but became more positive by the final presentation as participants became accustomed to presenting. As with the conclusions drawn by Finn (2007), the

evidence provided in this research concerning what constitutes an apprehension inducing audience is individual. While the majority of the apprehensive students prefer an audience of acquaintances, a large minority were relieved when the audience members were unfamiliar. A feature of the intervention is that the peers are positioned out of the direct vision of the presenters for the first two presentations. This was only mentioned by two students as helping to ease apprehension while the relocation of peers to be in front of the presenters for the final presentation was not mentioned as raising apprehension. The audience was the only feature of the environment considered in the study; no other themes related to the classroom environment were identified. However, as Finn (2007) points out, characteristics of the classroom can impact on the apprehension felt by students.

As might be expected, when planning and preparation went well and when groups practiced the students tended to report positive outcomes. Similarly, where there had been issues with planning and preparation or a lack of practice the students often reported experiencing high apprehension. This is particularly notable amongst the students whose PSA increased to high levels. Indeed, such evidence is particularly clear from Lee, one of the students who did not originally indicate that they had PSA but did subsequently in the post-intervention PRCA-24, and Roy who had been a member of the same group as Lee. While strong conclusions cannot be drawn from one example, the fact that the group had two individuals who were highly apprehensive towards presenting and no individuals who were particularly confident in the delivery of oral presentations, suggests that ensuring that students experiencing PSA are distributed across groups might be a strategy which would limit the possibility of apprehension being raised and increase the possibility of learning from peers who exhibit greater confidence towards presenting. This would be likely to include learning in the areas of planning, preparation and practice. Supporting this suggestion to a certain extent, the only other examples in the study of two apprehensive students in the same group was Dean and Marwan who were together in the second and third presentations. However,

their fellow members seem to have supported them well with both students mentioning that the support which other members provided contributed to their reduced apprehension. Marwan particularly seemed to benefit from others in the group, seeing their support as key to his reduced apprehension and noting that they were able to learn from each other.

As well as mentioning themes that focussed on the involvement of peers to varying extents, other themes featured prominently when students made comments that indicated the intervention either supported the development of their presentation skills or confidence towards presenting.

Tolerance of Stress was a theme which was promoted in the module and for which many students noted that they understood that nerves were a necessary part of presenting and that tolerance of stress was an aspect they had either improved or recognised that they needed to improve. The recognition that knowledge of the topic being presented was a necessary part of keeping apprehension to a manageable level increased over the duration of the module amongst the participants.

The structuring of the progression of three presentations is a feature that many of the apprehensive participants recognised as helping them develop confidence in readiness for the final presentation. Following the final presentation nine students commented on how the design of the intervention with three increasingly challenging presentations had helped them. This evidence is supported by the five students who noted that they felt more apprehension for the final presentation than the previous two due to the high stakes nature of the final presentation which might indicate that the fact that the previous two presentations were not high stakes might have contributed to their reduced apprehension during those projects. This evidence supports the assertions by Arquero et al. (2016) and Roberts (2017) that task design should ensure the progressive raising of the challenge involved.

Other aspects that students also mentioned in contributing to their development were tutor advice, the use of literature and the realisation that presenting was not as bad as anticipated (novelty).

This discussion demonstrates the variety of factors which seem to contribute to the apprehensive students' developing skills and confidence in delivering oral presentations, supporting Finn's (2007) observation concerning the range of variables that impact on apprehension and the unpredictable effect that many of the variables can have.

9.3.2 The Role of Self-efficacy in Developing Confidence

The fifth research question is, 'What evidence is there that sources of self-efficacy contribute to apprehensive students' confidence in presenting?' The evidence from the student reflections and comments provides strong support that the approach can support the development of self-efficacy amongst participating students who are apprehensive presenters. Despite this, it is also clear that this is not a guarantee and the complexity of any group presentation project can mean that self-efficacy can diminish and with it levels of PSA are likely to rise. In order to address this question van Ginkel et al.'s (2015, p.68) 'Seven Design Principles for Developing Oral Presentation Competence in Higher Education' and Bandura's (1977) Efficacy Expectations are used.

Taking van Ginkel et al.'s (2015, p.68) 'Seven Design Principles for Developing Oral Presentation Competence in Higher Education', the design of the intervention incorporates six of the seven principles with the seventh, "Facilitate self-assessment using videotaping and portfolios to encourage students' self-efficacy beliefs, oral presentation competence and attitudes towards presenting" (van Ginkel et al., 2015, p.68), partially incorporated; the intervention includes portfolios with reflection but does not incorporate videotaping. For the remaining six principles which are incorporated in the intervention, two relate to instruction. There is little reference to these despite being promoted by the tutors. The only reference made by participants is to the developmental

design of the intervention which a number of the students mentioned when reflecting on the final presentation. The principles which the students mention in their comments are the opportunities to observe presentations, the opportunities to practise, particularly before the final presentation where a formative presentation delivered to one of the ASTs is incorporated in the design and the provision of timely feedback which includes peer feedback.

The elements of self-efficacy first mentioned by Bandura all feature strongly in the comments made by students. Firstly, mastery experience, which is recognised as the strongest form of self-efficacy, is supported through the range of references that the students make to practice and student success. However, the design of the presentations as role plays based on real tasks does not feature strongly in any comments that these students make. Vicarious experience through the peer observations has been noted as a strong theme in the student comments. While it has already been noted that the comments relate to both the development of presentation skills and reduced apprehension, given the high correlation students see between the development of skills and confidence through peer observation, when students only discuss how they perceive peer observation as having helped their presentation skills improve, there is a probability that this also means that their confidence in presenting has increased. Verbal persuasion, which is described as a weak form of self-efficacy has for many of the students in this case been an important element of self-efficacy. While feedback particularly from tutors but also from peers is mentioned as a positive theme, the support given between peers within groups and one-to-one discussions with the tutors indicate that this is a valuable source of self-efficacy in this intervention. Elements of the final source of self-efficacy, emotional and physiological arousal, feature in the students comments but were not developed as a distinct theme. However, students' comments about tolerance of stress and reflections fall into this category with tolerance of stress being a theme which features strongly amongst the comments made. Given the notion promoted by Rawlins (1993), Motley (1995) and van Emden and Becker (2004),

that a certain level of apprehension towards public speaking is desirable, then helping apprehensive presenters to cope with a certain level of apprehension, may be as important as reducing apprehension. The only study found to have considered this is Iba's (2007) exploratory study of hardiness and PSA in which hardiness was used as an indicator for tolerance of stress. While no significant correlation between hardiness and PSA was found in Iba's study, there was enough evidence to suggest that further research should be conducted. The evidence in this study supports Iba's (2007) notion that future investigation of PSA might also focus on how interventions can increase tolerance of stress. The evidence provided by two students, Jane and Rizwan, who were highly apprehensive towards presenting at the end of the module supports this notion. The comments they make show enthusiasm towards presenting whilst revealing a feeling of nervousness; both mention improving tolerance of stress as a factor in their progress.

9.4 A Theoretical Framework for Reducing PSA and Developing Presentation Skills

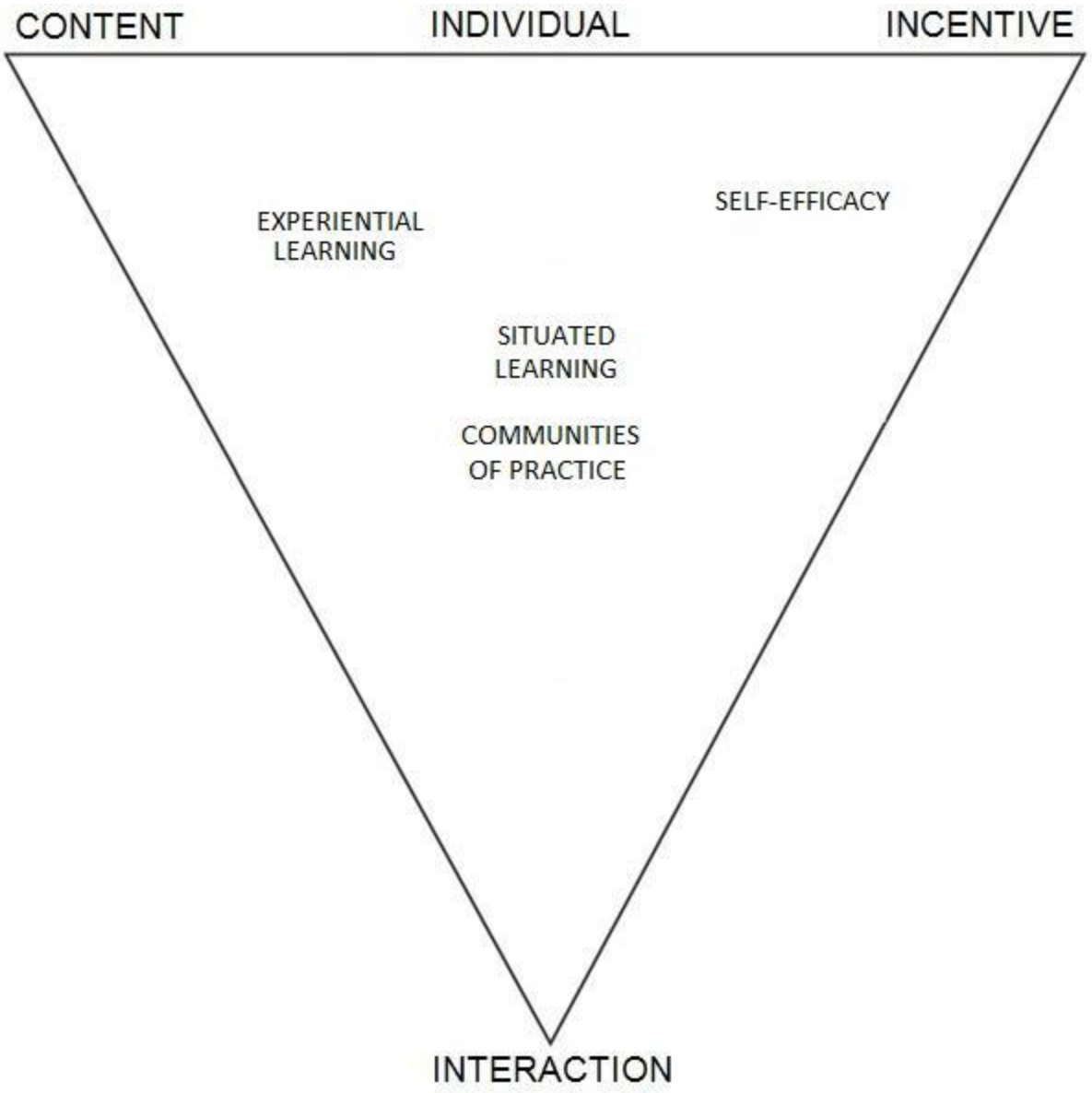
The final aim is to contribute to the development of a theoretical framework for the reduction of PSA and development of oral presentation skills as part of the same intervention. For this there is one research question.

9.4.1 Building a Pedagogical Framework for the Intervention

The final research question is, 'To what extent can an approach based on presentation skills development through problem-based learning and contributing student pedagogy also help students with PSA?' The approach, discussed in detail in Section 5.6, is underpinned by the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 5. Therefore, this research question allows for the framework to be assessed and consider how it contributes to our knowledge in this area. This study has attempted to contribute to the

gap in the literature, discussed by Brown and Morrissey (2004), De Grez and Valcke (2010), Byrne et al. (2012), Hassall et al. (2013a) and van Ginkel et al. (2015), concerning strategies in the development of presentation skills but specifically those aimed at reducing PSA. The classroom activities used in this intervention draw on the principles of PBL and CSP. In turn these classroom approaches are underpinned by situated learning theory and communities of practice which occupy the centre of Illeris's (2009) three dimensional model of learning (see Figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1 A Framework of Learning in the Current Context



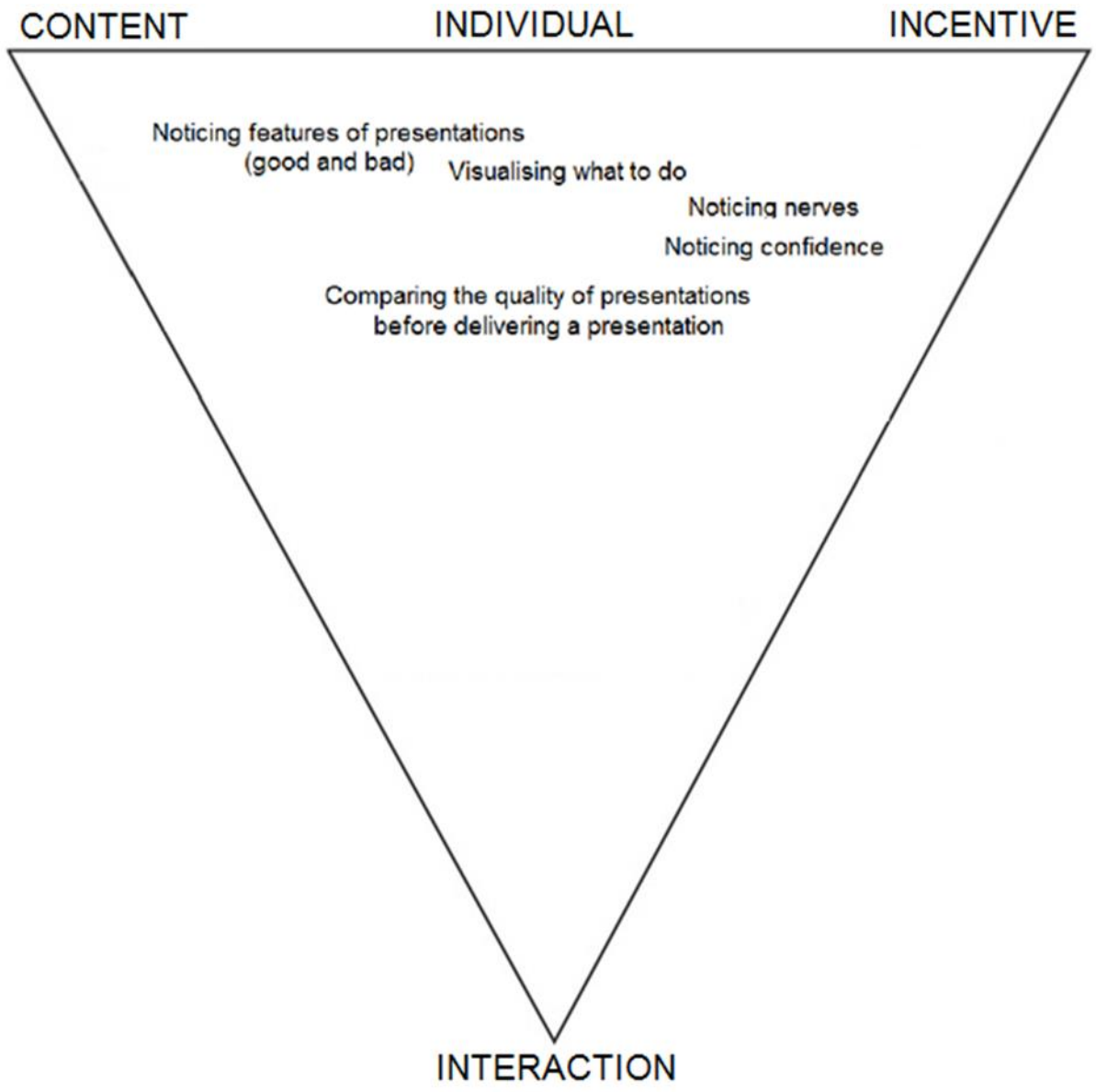
This model of learning provides a broad framework which allows for the possibility that learning can be social (the interaction dimension) and include both the learning of content (content dimension) and development of emotional learning (incentive dimension). The reflections and comments of students indicating PSA in the pre-intervention administration of the PRCA-24 show that such an approach can be successful but also show that this success is not certain and progress can be uneven. Roy is an example of a student who made progress and reported how well the second presentation had progressed only to find this confidence damaged by a poorly functioning group for the final presentation. Cases such as Lee, who ended the module as highly apprehensive are a minority, while cases such as Donna provide encouragement that the intervention draws on the three dimension of learning to help students both develop confidence and skills in delivering oral presentations. Donna discussed practising in the group as a way of building confidence in her group towards presenting. She was also prepared to share her feelings of apprehension with other members of the group so that they could learn from her developing confidence and therefore as a result the group presentation might improve. By the time Donna reached the final presentation she was confident that her team working and confidence in presenting were fast developing; seeing this development as "phenomenal". She found that peer feedback helped contribute towards her developing confidence but also noted that her presentation skills were improving. She also reflected that the way she dealt with stress had changed and felt that she was better prepared to deal with it in presentations.

The results of this study support the assertion by Cuny (2015, p.38) that "not every technique for managing or reducing PSA will work for everyone". Even in a multifaceted approach such as the intervention in the current study, some students remain apprehensive and make little progress in developing presentation skills.

Illeris's (2009) model illustrates how the same activity can lead to learning which incorporates different levels of learning, as well as non-learning, in the three dimensions.

In the content dimension many of the apprehensive presenters need to experience transformational learning in order to both develop their learning in the incentive dimension, giving themselves the confidence to present, and to ensure that they develop good presentation skills. Taking themes from the research and mapping them to Illeris's three dimensional model serves to illustrate how the same activity can produce different individual learning and learning in Illeris's three dimensions simultaneously.

Figure 9.2 Peer Observation Theme Mapped to Illeris's Three Dimensions of Learning

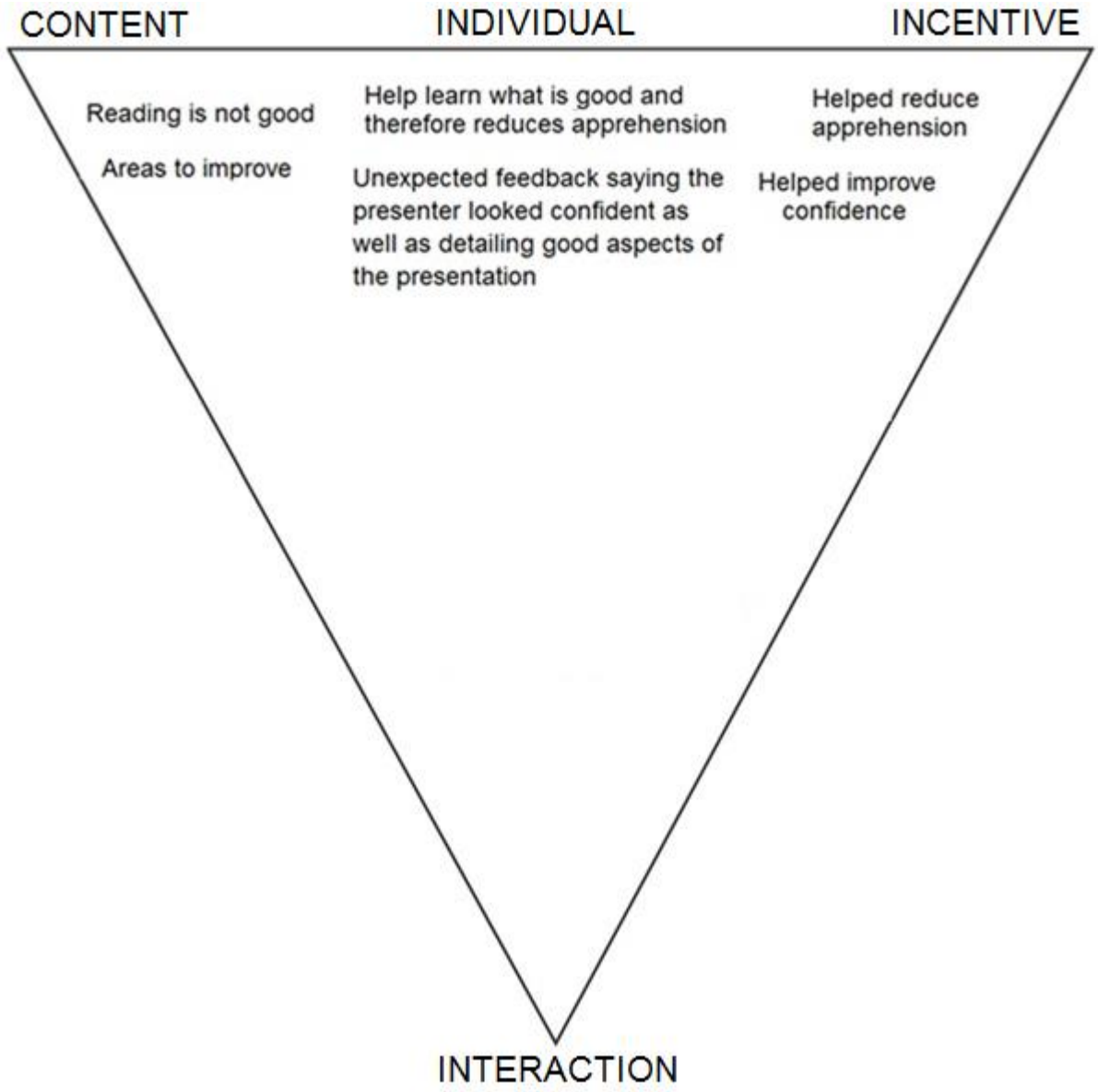


Peer observation of presentations is underpinned by CSP which in turn draws theoretical underpinning from communities of practice thus accounting for the social nature of learning. Evidence from the study supports van Ginkel et al.'s (2015) conclusion that peer observation supports learning through the enhancement of self-efficacy towards presentations and the development of relevant skills. This supports learning in both the content and incentive dimensions; students indicated that peer observation helped either the development of skills or confidence or both. The evidence from the comments made by these students illustrates how learning varies amongst the students. Figure 9.2 shows some of the comments made by students. None of the comments are placed along the horizontal 'Individual' line at the top of the triangle since all are concerned with watching peers present and therefore the learning involves others and must have an element of social learning. The comments which focus on features of presentations are mostly concerned with content and therefore are placed towards the top left of Illeris's triangle. The comment 'Visualising what to do' is placed closer to the centre; while it is still concerned with content such a comment suggests that there may be a need to provide motivation through the visualisation of the presentation. The statements which involve noticing emotions (nerves and confidence) are towards the right of Illeris's triangle but more social than the previous examples since the focus is now on the presenters themselves and not on the feature of the presentation. The final group of remarks included comparing presentations being observed with the likely quality of the observer's own presentation. This is placed closer to the centre as it concerns both content and emotion; it at least produces an emotional reaction, and it involves direct comparison of more than one group with what the observer believes will be their own presentation. While there is some social learning, it is more limited when compared with the group themes. Hence, the comments are all towards the top of the model.

The Feedback theme also provides some evidence of learning being multidimensional and is also underpinned by CSP. The social element, similarly to the Peer Observation,

concerns using others as a resource for learning. The internal learning revealed through many of the comments made by the apprehensive students indicates that individuals are not all learning the same thing and that the learning occurs in both internal dimensions. Figure 9.3 maps to Illeris's model some aspects derived from feedback. Comments such as "Reading is not good" provide evidence of an individual learning the skills of presenting and therefore focussed on content. In contrast, comments such as "Helped reduce apprehension" are concerned with emotional learning. In between, comments demonstrate that learning in both content and incentive dimensions can be part of the same activity. Where a student receives independently written feedback from peers and tutors which provides similar but unexpected feedback, as happened with Dean, then this has the potential to be transformational. In this case Dean was certain that audiences noticed his anxiety. The evidence of peer and tutor feedback was powerful enough to make him rethink this assumption.

Figure 9.3 Feedback Theme Mapped to Illeris's Three Dimensions of Learning



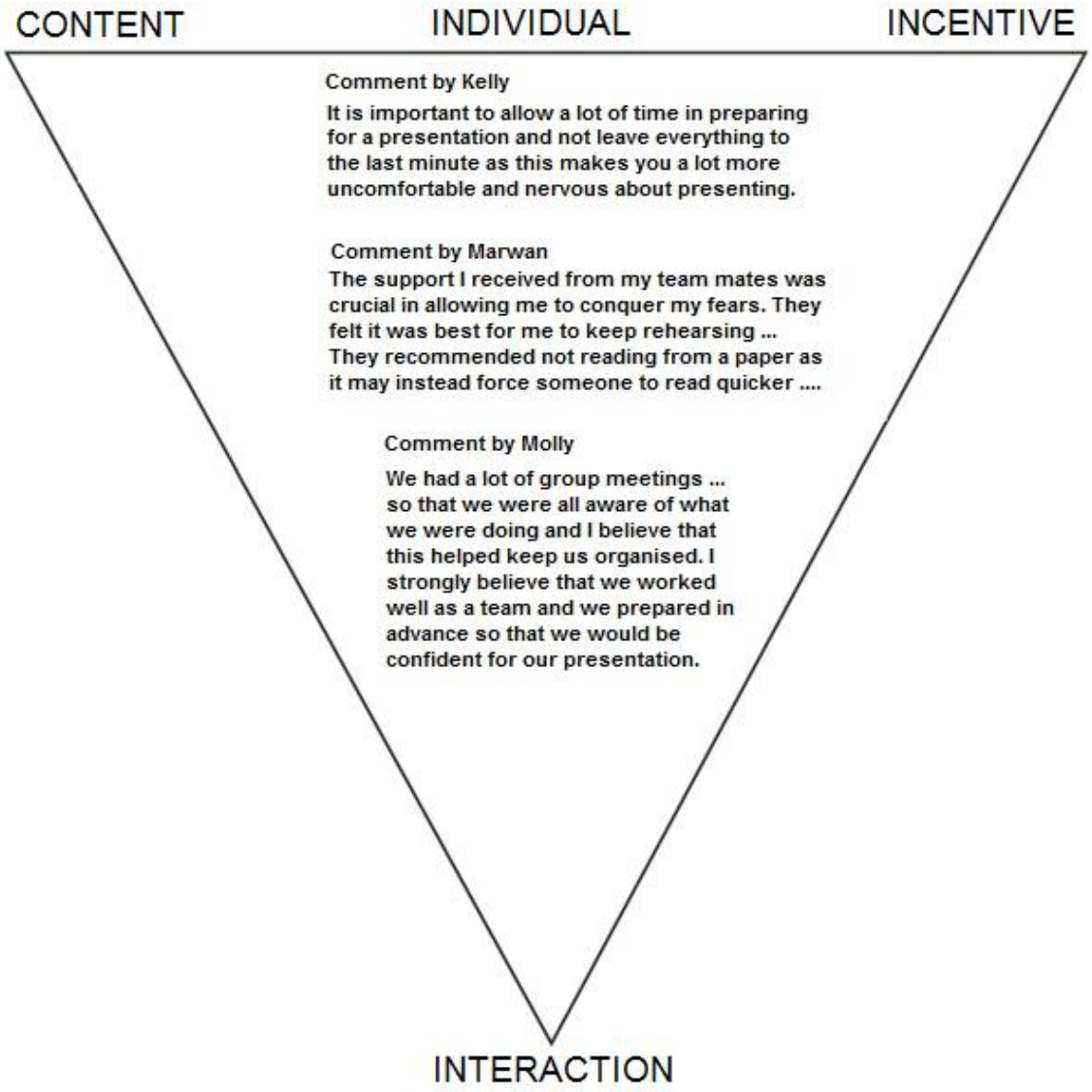
The design of the group work in the intervention is underpinned by PBL, an approach supported by situated learning which has not previously been widely used in accounting education (Stanley & Marsden, 2012). An approach underpinned by PBL encourages rounded learning (Savin-Badin & Major, 2004) and has been widely seen as supporting the development of self-efficacy (Albion, 1999; Jungert & Rosander, 2010; Duncan & Schulz, 2015).

In the student comments and reflections, Groupwork was the most frequently occurring theme. While the emphasis was on learning in groups (interaction dimension) and changes in apprehension (incentive dimension), the comments provided evidence that the students felt they were learning about presentation skills too (content dimension). In addition to the impact on apprehension, students mentioned how working in groups helped them learn new skills from each other, deliver better presentations and give feedback to each other when practicing. The example provided by Donna offers an illustration of how learning in the incentive dimension and content dimension can occur simultaneously in a social context, while Marwan and Doris both highlighted the close association between working with peers, improving presentation skills and overcoming fears. In Marwan's case his learning seems to shift with early comments mostly concerned with his PSA and his later reflections moving towards the content dimension as he becomes more concerned about skills development towards the end of the module. In Figure 9.4 the comment by Marwan provides an illustration of how he is learning in the three dimensions. The key to his improving confidence (incentive) is his learning about rehearsing before presentations and not reading in them (content). This outcome is brought about with the support of his group (interaction). Molly similarly places emphasis on the role of the group (interaction) in ensuring they were all prepared (content) and confident (incentive). There is evidence that negative experiences support learning with comments by Kelly showing that despite her feeling nervous in the first presentation she had learned that this was caused by a lack of preparation (see Figure 9.4). By the final presentation Kelly explains how the learning gained through the activities had given her greater confidence.

As well as many positive associations between social learning and the development of presentation skills and confidence, there are also some negative ones. Evidence in the study is most prevalent amongst the students whose apprehension towards presenting increased according to the results of the PRCA-24 questionnaires. In Lee's case, he initially indicates that being part of the group had helped him with planning and delivery

which can be classed as learning in the content dimension but in the same reflection he comments that he felt that he "was the weakest member of the team" which represents learning, albeit negative learning, in the incentive dimension. In his final presentation it seems the social aspect of being in a group with another apprehensive student and no individual willing to take a leadership role has contributed to his increasing apprehension. Zain provides little evidence due to his low engagement in the module. His low engagement may also be an indication of why his apprehension increases with his observations suggesting he feels he lets his team down and when discussing what he learned about presentations saying he thought that they were "very tense and stressful". These examples provide further support of the interdependence between the three learning dimensions.

Figure 9.4 Groupwork Theme Mapped to Illeris's Three Dimensions of Learning

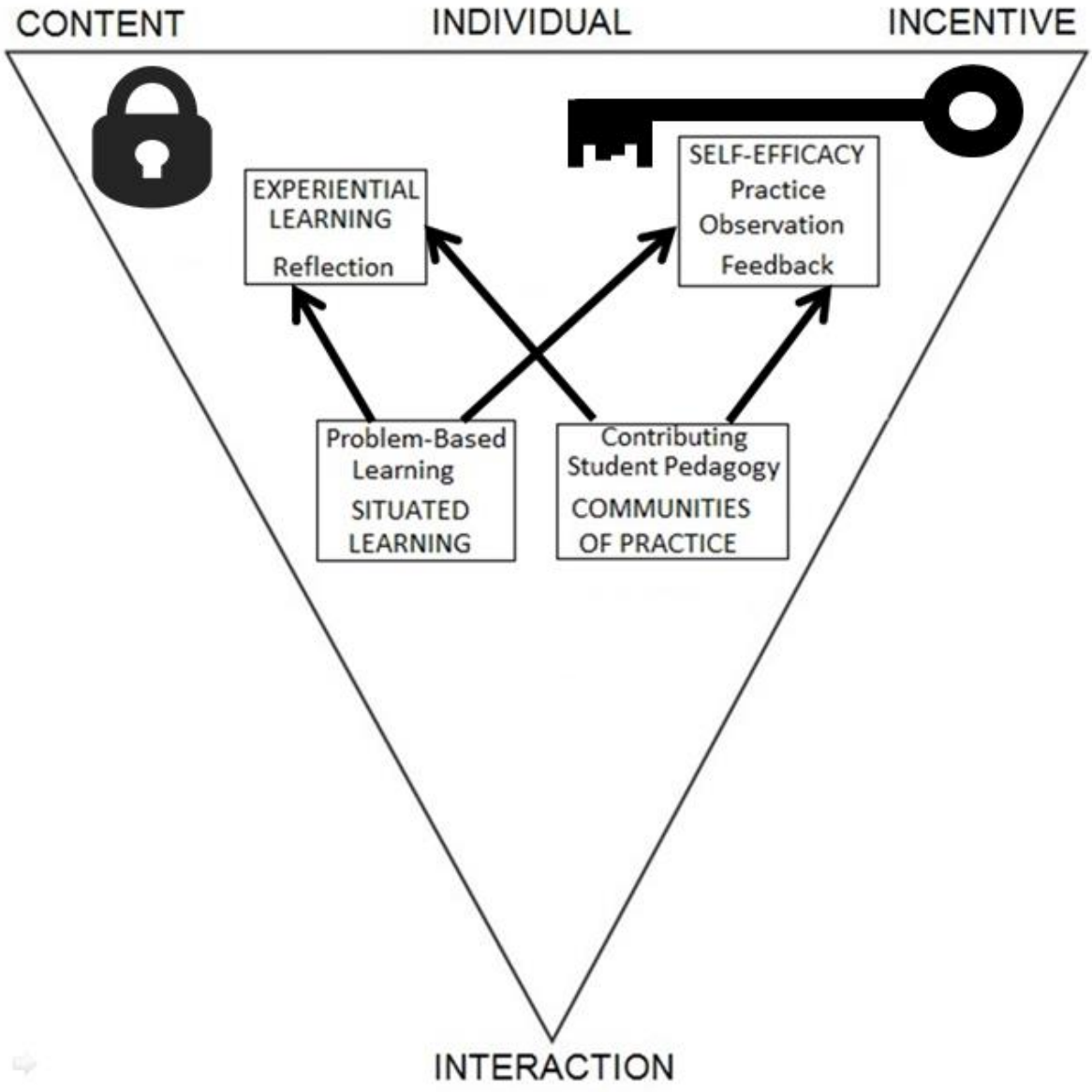


In conclusion, the evidence provided by the apprehensive presenters supports the notion that an approach based on PBL and CSP underpinned by social learning and communities of practice can enable students to develop skills of presenting as well as develop positive attitudes towards presenting. However, progress may be uneven and groups which are dominated by highly apprehensive students may not help learning happen and may even lead to raised apprehension as students reinforce each other's anxieties.

Illeris's three dimensional representation of learning can accommodate learning theories and pedagogies. Figure 9.5 shows how the current intervention might map on to Illeris's

model of learning. While it identifies the main theories and pedagogies identified in this study, it does not preclude other forms of learning. Furthermore, while theories and pedagogies have been mapped on to Illeris's framework, the positions may have a certain fluidity depending on how individuals and groups approach the activities; there is likely to be interdependence and overlap between them. So while reflection, which forms part of experiential learning, is located towards the content dimension of the model, since the students are focussed on developing skills, the reflection relies on the fact that the students have been involved in the activities underpinned by PBL. Additionally, in their reflections many discuss activities such as practice, observation and feedback which are underpinned by CSP. Similarly, self-efficacy is placed towards the incentive dimension of the model with practice, observation and feedback which can nurture self-efficacy. However, observation of peers and feedback from peers are activities which are underpinned by CSP. So it is important to recognise that what helps develop self-efficacy may have more balance between incentive and content with skills and confidence developing simultaneously. As has been previously mentioned, while the three dimensions can in theory be treated separately, in reality they form one integrated process (Ritchie, 2007, p.204). Figure 9.5 shows Illeris's three dimensional framework augmented to account for the current study. It shows that the main focus of activity promotes learning through PBL and CSP. These allow for there to be a social dimension to the activities. While accepting the importance of the social dimension, the main focus is on the 'Individual' and the notion that we need to recognise both the content and incentive dimensions as working together and that if learning does not occur in the incentive dimension then learning in the content dimension is less likely. The study has shown that self-efficacy is an important component of the incentive dimension, represented in Figure 9.5 by the key. While other elements of the incentive dimension are not precluded, this study provides evidence that the focus of learning in the content dimension, represented by the lock is likely to remain unlocked unless opened simultaneously by the key, in other words, individuals developing sufficient self-efficacy.

Figure 9.5 Theories and Pedagogies Mapped to Illeris's Three Dimensional Model of Learning



In short, this demonstrates that a multifaceted approach underpinned by PBL and CSP can provide students experiencing PSA with the opportunity to develop their confidence and skills in delivering presentations. Furthermore, it addresses the concerns expressed by Jarvis (2010) by showing how learning can occur in the incentive dimension.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This thesis has presented a case study of a classroom intervention which is designed to help undergraduate accountancy students develop presentation skills as well as build confidence in presenting. Over a number of years, the tutors involved developed the intervention, being satisfied with its success, without considering how the approach might be underpinned theoretically. Therefore, the overarching aim from the outset was to determine which aspects of the intervention contribute to the successful outcomes achieved with the most apprehensive students. In doing so it contributes a framework for a classroom intervention which, while not guaranteeing success, provides varied real learning opportunities for students to develop their presentation skills and reduce their apprehension as part of the same intervention.

This concluding chapter begins by summarising the key findings of the study and the contribution that it has made to this area of education. Some of the limitations of the study are then discussed before considerations for future research are presented. As is fitting for a professional doctorate, an important consideration was that the findings of the study would be relevant to practice. Therefore, some points that practitioners might take from the study are then highlighted. Finally, I offer a brief reflection on the process I have undertaken to complete this study.

10.2 Key Findings

This case study has adopted a critical realist approach and follows Wellington's (2015, p.323) belief about educational research not being conclusive but that it provides a window on the intervention being studied. Therefore, the study has not sought to provide definitive solutions to the task of helping students become more confident

presenters but offers evidence from one particular context which may help inform professionals who can judge for themselves how it might inform their practices. Despite these caveats the findings of the study are plausible and credible additions to our knowledge of how a focus on PSA can be added to interventions designed to develop presentation skills.

The study offers multiple insights into the progress that students, particularly apprehensive ones, make in developing confidence in presentations. It provides evidence in the form of the pre-intervention and post-intervention administrations of the widely used PRCA-24 questionnaire that average levels of apprehension fell across all the cohorts studied and for the highly apprehensive students as a whole. It also shows evidence that at least some of the reduced apprehension amongst the highly apprehensive students is brought about through some of the themes developed from the reflections of the final two cohorts (2015/16 and 2016/17) during the intervention. Therefore, compelling evidence supports the notion that such themes as preparation, practice, support from group members, peer observation and receiving feedback have all contributed to reduced levels of apprehension felt by the most anxious students. Furthermore, evidence from themes such as the nature of the audience, knowledge of the topic being presented, the provision of tutor advice, the use of literature and the progressive design of the intervention show that these features can contribute to reducing apprehension for some students. However, as has been mentioned previously, such themes do not explain all possible reductions in apprehension. Measuring some factors such as maturation would be impossible in an approach such as that adopted in this study. In other cases, such as observing lecturers or external speakers the possible factor may not have been mentioned in reflection by students if they thought it were peripheral to the task of reflecting on the presentation they had delivered. Despite these unknowns, analysing the reflections and comments of apprehensive presenters has provided a rare insight into the real experiences of students during their studies and

specifically into which features of the intervention provide students with support in reducing apprehension and developing presentation skills.

The evidence from the case study shows that what helps apprehensive students reduce their apprehension can be highly individual and dependent on a variety of factors, illustrated through the variety of themes developed from the reflections and comments made by the students. The design of the intervention incorporates a variety of features which together help many of the apprehensive students show improvements in their levels of apprehension towards delivering presentations and skills in presenting. However, features of the intervention which are underpinned by self-efficacy, in line with Hopf and Colby (1992), Orejudo, Fernández-Turrado, Briz, (2012), Hassall et al. (2013b), Verano-Tacoronte and Bolívar-Cruz (2015) and Roberts (2017) feature strongly in the themes mentioned by the students. Furthermore, many of the features noted in the comments made by the apprehensive students reflect van Ginkel et al.'s (2015) 'Seven Design Principles for Developing Oral Presentation Competence in Higher Education' which has a strong focus on the development of self-efficacy.

In addition, a theoretical base for oral presentation instruction that De Grez and Valcke (2010) say is lacking is addressed through the provision of Illeris's three dimensional model as a framework for the intervention. This framework emphasises the social nature of learning, hence the extensive use of group work and peer learning in the intervention. The importance of this feature is borne out by the extent to which the group and peer themes are mentioned in the reflections and comments made by the apprehensive students. The importance of the incentive dimension of learning is demonstrated with the development of self-efficacy towards presenting shown to be key for many in unlocking skills learning opportunities in the content dimension.

Despite the emphasis on the social nature of learning, the study provides evidence that attention should be given to the construction of the groups in which the students present, with evidence of highly apprehensive students benefitting from more confident peers but having apprehension reinforced when in groups with other highly apprehensive

students. Ensuring that apprehensive students are not concentrated in groups should provide a greater opportunity for them to learn from their more confident and more skilled peers. Having concentrations of apprehensive students in the same groups increases the likelihood that the negative feelings towards presenting will be reinforced. This evidence lends support to the conclusion drawn by Edwards and Walker (2007) that OCA is reduced when students are part of learning communities.

Finally, an unexpected but valuable finding concerns the role of tolerance of stress in helping apprehensive students face the prospect of presenting. While the research conducted into PSA is extensive, little attention has been paid in the relevant literature to the development of tolerance of stress, with Iba's (2007) study of hardiness and PSA appearing to be the only published research on the topic. Given that a certain level of apprehension towards delivering a presentation is desirable then the evidence provided by the current study suggests that further research in the area of how best tolerance of stress can be nurtured is desirable.

10.3 The Contribution to Knowledge

This study is a professional doctorate in the area of Education and has investigated an area of pedagogy of particular concern in Accountancy Education. It provides a first insight into an intervention designed at developing presentation skills and reducing the associated apprehension felt by many students that draws on student reflections across a whole intervention. The research which has previously been conducted into OCA and PSA amongst undergraduates has tended to explore the area through the measurement of apprehension (Byrne et al., 2012) or has often explored the efficacy of interventions through experimental or quasi-experimental design, for example Ayres et al. (1998), Behnke and Sawyer, (1999) and Finn (2007). Therefore, this study provides one of the few insights into what Byrne et al. (2012, p.566) refer to as the "lived experiences of

students" who are anxious presenters and is the first to do so over the duration of an intervention.

The study underlines the notion that since the causes of PSA are varied, the solutions are also varied. This therefore highlights the need to look beyond the data provided by questionnaires such as the PRCA-24 and establish what these scores mean for individuals. The study shows that it is important for instructors to develop an awareness of the range of possibilities for classroom interventions rather than search for a specific solution which are unlikely to be suitable for everyone.

The study focusses on a classroom intervention underpinned by a framework based on Illeris's (2009) three dimensional model of learning. The evidence supports Illeris's notion that students can learn in the three dimensions (social, content and incentive) so that not only is evidence provided that students learn from their peers through working in teams, through watching each other's presentations and receiving peer as well as tutor feedback on their presentations but that learning can also take place in the incentive and content dimensions simultaneously, meaning skills can develop and apprehension can be reduced at the same time. As illustrated in Figure 9.5, this is facilitated by activities based on PBL and CSP which can be placed at the heart of Illeris's model. This study further develops Illeris's model by establishing self-efficacy as a key element in his incentive dimension, thus addressing Jarvis's (2010) concern with the model that detail is lacking regarding how learning occurs in the incentive dimension.

Since van Ginkel et al.'s (2015) 'Design Principles for Developing Oral Presentation Competence' form the first attempt at framing any guidelines on which to develop approaches, this study is a first practical example of much of these design principles being implemented and builds on Docan-Morgan and Schmidt's (2012) call for the development of innovative classroom interventions. Then focussing on the wider concept of OCA, the study addresses Byrne et al.'s (2012) suggestion for research into interventions suited to helping reduce apprehension and meets Hassall et al.'s (2013a)

call for the reporting of interventions that show success in helping reduce apprehension reported by students.

Finally, it has been mentioned in the findings that tolerance of stress has been shown to be an important attribute to consider in public speaking. Since it is widely accepted that a certain level of apprehension towards delivering a presentation is desirable then a developed tolerance of stress is important.

10.4 Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations and considerations which need to be taken into account when interpreting the results and findings of this case study.

An important consideration concerns the critical realist stance taken in the research. Critical realism is a contentious research philosophy in which it is accepted that the reality of the mechanism being investigated and the individual experiences of that reality may not coincide. Indeed, a critical realist study accepts that reality may never be discoverable, as it may be independent of our knowledge of it, but that as we continue to conduct research, the claims we make become closer interpretations of reality. This underpinning philosophy should be taken into account when interpreting the results and findings of this study.

As has been mentioned many times in this study, the themes developed from the student reflections and comments help to explain some of the reductions in PSA shown in the study but there are factors, such as maturation that are not measured, factors such as the influence of guest speakers which may have had an impact but which were not mentioned by the students in the data and other factors which were not mentioned and are unknown. In addition, the phenomenon of regression to the mean cannot be discounted as a contributing factor towards to the reduced average scores obtained on the post-intervention PRCA-24 questionnaire.

It is inevitable that there is some bias in the sample. The participants in the study were those students who agreed to participate and who completed both the pre-intervention and post-intervention iterations of the PRCA-24 questionnaire. It may be that some individuals who left the course before it finished may have done so at least in part as a result of apprehension felt towards delivering oral presentations. There is no evidence that this is the case but the possibility cannot be discounted. Furthermore, some students who declined to participate in the study may have done so as result of the apprehension which thinking about presenting raised.

The data collection for the study intentionally relied as far as possible on activities which were already part of the intervention, the main sources being the PRCA-24 questionnaire and the regular reflections written by the students. While the decision to use reflections was taken so as to avoid leading the students and to discover what they naturally wrote about when reflecting on the presentation activities, it is possible that less will have been revealed about the students' apprehensions and how the intervention impacts on their apprehension. Had more time been available then greater use of research conversations would have been made in order to gain a greater insight into this area.

The data collection for the results presented in Chapter Eight was not consistent. The data in the chapter was provided by students who indicated that they were highly apprehensive prior to the intervention from the 2015/16 and 2016/17 cohorts and students from both cohorts who indicated that they were apprehensive following the intervention. For the students who indicated that they were highly apprehensive prior to the intervention from the 2015/16, data was collected in the form of written reflections and from research conversations conducted systematically with each of the ten students. This approach was not possible with the 2016/17 cohort due to long-term illness of the module leader. Therefore, while written reflections were provided by all, the ability to conduct research conversations in the level of detail that had taken place with the previous cohort was not practical. Also, since the students who indicated that they had

become apprehensive following the intervention were not known until after the module was complete, the only data is from the reflections they provided.

Consideration needs to be given to the theme of Tolerance of Stress. The theme is listed as one of the competencies which students can choose to reflect upon following activities. Had this not been the case then it is likely that students would not have been drawn to discuss this theme as often as they did.

Finally, an important consideration in any research is the role of the researcher which in this study is my role as a teacher-researcher. The study is underpinned by critical realism and as such accepts that the nature of the research is altered by the fact that research is conducted and that the researcher is part of the research context. This should not diminish the quality of the research but is an important consideration for anyone reading it. Furthermore, the interpretation of the qualitative data is conducted by the researcher and as such is a subjective interpretation which may be interpreted differently by those who are not part of the research or the intervention.

10.5 Implications for Future Research

This study provides some insights into the impact of an intervention designed to help students develop their presentation skills and reduce the apprehension they feel towards presenting. In doing so, it can offer avenues for continued research in the area, as well as inform those conducting research into PSA in the future.

The study provides evidence of the need for more studies to look beyond the quantitative data provided by the widely used PRCA-24 or similar questionnaires, if a fuller picture of apprehension experienced by students is to be uncovered. With the causes of apprehension remaining an evolving construct (Sawyer, 2016) and with the array of potential solutions available, there is a need to discover more about the experiences of the individual. The need to discover more about the meaning individuals attach to the levels of apprehension they experience is supported by some of the

contrasting comments that students provide to support similar levels of apprehension indicated in the PRCA-24 questionnaire. This study supports the general consistency of the PRCA-24 questionnaire shown over many years and it seems to remain the most efficient way of assessing OCA. However, taking forward the findings of this study and discovering more about the lived experiences of individuals with PSA would add to our knowledge about both causes and possible solutions.

Since the current study is a small scale case study of a particular context, similar research is needed in other contexts which aim to develop individuals as presenters in order to ascertain what similarities and differences there might be. For example, studies conducted in universities which have cohorts with different profiles to the current one would help build a larger picture of the themes that emerge as being the most effective components of such interventions. Similarly research might also be conducted in other disciplines. Of the sources of self-efficacy, mastery experiences is generally accepted as the most powerful source. However, the other sources of self-efficacy, particularly vicarious experiences through peer observation, have been shown in this study to have an impact on reducing apprehension. Therefore, research into interventions which incorporate sources of self-efficacy would be particularly useful. Furthermore, while this study has established self-efficacy as a component of the incentive dimension of learning, future studies may investigate which other concepts might also be important in this domain of learning.

Another area which could be usefully researched is the balance of formative and summative presentation activity. The final presentation is a high stakes project while the first two presentations are essentially formative but carry a small summative element based on the assumption that many students would choose to avoid the activity if it were entirely formative. This has always been the case since the innovation was introduced. Therefore, consideration of alternative means of encouraging student participation so that they take advantage of formative presentation opportunities would be a useful area of research.

This study has provided evidence that consideration needs to be given to the design of presentation groups and particularly ensuring that the number of highly apprehensive presenters in a particular group is kept to a minimum. Future research could usefully investigate the optimal size of groups and how many apprehensive students should be in each group.

Finally, the attribute of tolerance of stress has received little attention from researchers in the area of PSA but the evidence of this study suggests it needs to be considered in future investigations of PSA.

10.6 Implications for Practice

When practitioners consider how best to approach interventions designed to help students reduce CA, the current study supports the view promoted by Allen et al. (1989), Beatty et al. (1998), Finn (2007) and Shanahan (2013) that the design of interventions needs to be multifaceted. The components which should be included in the approach which aims to reduce PSA would seem most usefully drawn from those that promote self-efficacy. While the importance of preparation and practice has long been considered as the most important component, for some it may be that other components are the catalyst which helps them begin to develop confidence towards presentation activities. There may be a number of ways of achieving this but in line with the intervention reported by Roberts (2017) an intervention underpinned by PBL, experiential learning and CSP would seem to provide the basis for developing self-efficacy and therefore helping apprehensive presenters overcome their fears.

The intervention reported in this study consists of a series of three presentations for which the stakes start low and end high and is a basis for design which draws support from van Ginkel et al.'s (2015) design principles and conclusions drawn by both Arquero et al. (2016) and Roberts (2017). The evidence from this study and the literature

suggests that practitioners should give consideration to the design of interventions so that early formative opportunities to present are taken up by students.

As well as having implications for educators the findings should be of interest to those working in the accounting profession or indeed any profession in which similar issues have been identified. Chapter Three discussed the issue of graduate employers' lack of satisfaction with the skills development of graduates and also noted the persistence of the stereotypical image of the reticent accountant. The approach discussed shows that progress can be made with many students towards developing their confidence in oral communication. Given that, as Arquero et al. (2007) note, communication is the main competency required in the industry, the approach developed should also help undergraduates develop skills along with their confidence. Taking this approach in the first year of the course should help those who hold the perception of the profession as requiring little communication to reassess their perception and consider whether a change of discipline might be the best course of action. The result should be a breaking down of the stereotype and help ensure that graduates from accounting courses which adopt such an approach are considered more suitable by the graduate employers.

10.7 Concluding Remarks

I began this study because I wanted to understand more about my own practices in helping students develop their oral presentation skills and particularly what elements of the intervention helped highly apprehensive students gain confidence in presenting. In 2010 I discovered the PRCA-24 questionnaire and introduced it into the module so that students could use it as evidence in their reflections when writing about aspects of oral communication. I decided that PSA was the area that I wanted to research when I began my professional doctorate in 2012. What I did not know at the time was just how much I would learn about the way that the students in my classroom learn and in turn how the study would help the intervention develop. Had I, for example, not piloted interviews with the apprehensive students and concluded that I need to replace these with less

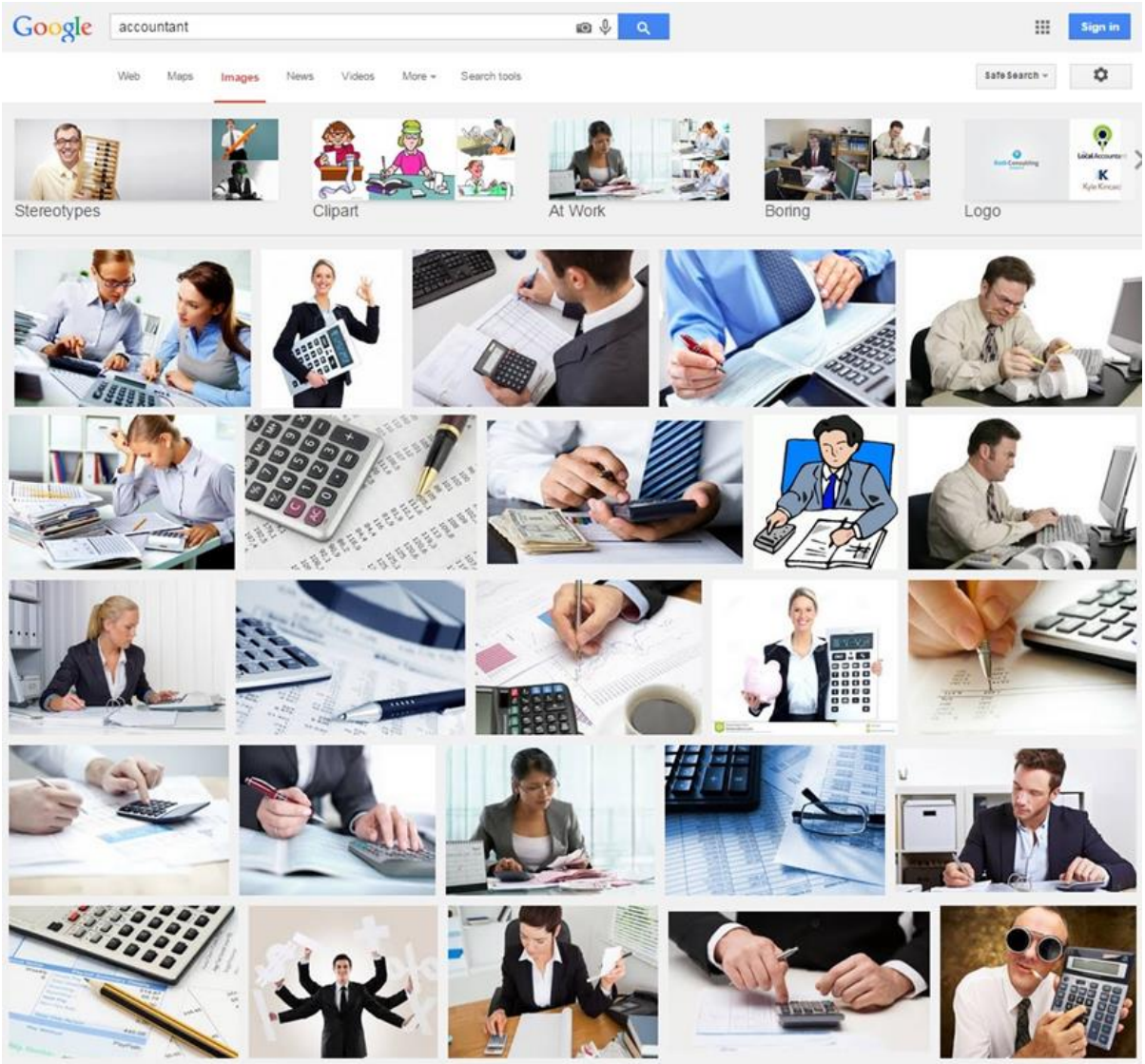
formal research conversations, these may never have formed part of the intervention. Also, for the first time I took the pre-intervention results of the PRCA-24 questionnaire and forwarded the names of the most apprehensive students to the module leader so that the group selection could account for this. These are two clear examples of my learning from my own practice and this study helping with the development of the intervention.

I hope that what I have presented in this case study will inspire others to investigate this fascinating area so that we can learn more about how best to help students develop confidence in delivering oral presentations. Evidence from dissemination of the study to date has been encouraging with an early conference paper generating great interest and the subsequent published paper already cited three times (see Appendix 14).

Appendices

Appendix 1

Screenshot of Google Image Search for 'Accountant' Made on 10 January 2015



Appendix 2

Stereotypical Image of Accountants

2 stereotypical image of accountants

Forums: English, Esl, Grammar

Email this Topic • Print this Page

Justin Xu

REPLY Wed 18 Jan, 2012 08:54 pm

"I learned that, unlike the stereotypical image most people have of accountants being bean counters working in a dimly lit back office wearing a visor, it is a profession that offers those who love it infinite avenues for creativity, growing a business, and improving efficiency and accuracy, among countless other skills."

In this paragraph about the stereotypical image of accountants, what does the "visor" refer to? Do foreign accountants wear a visor while doing their job?

Stumble It! • Tweet This • Bookmark on Delicious • Share on Facebook • Share on MySpace

Topic Stats	Top Replies	Link to this Topic

Type: Question • Score: 2 • Views: 5,813 • Replies: 3

View best answer, chosen by Justin Xu

Ceili

Selected Answer

3 REPLY Wed 18 Jan, 2012 09:06 pm

The green thing on his head is a visor.

1 Reply

Justin Xu

1 REPLY Wed 18 Jan, 2012 09:34 pm

@Ceili,
Thank you very much Ceili. Good Picture !

0 Replies

roger

1 REPLY Wed 18 Jan, 2012 09:54 pm

@Justin Xu,
Yes, that's what the paragraph is about. The real stereotypical accountant is on that looks at his feet when he talks to you. An agressive accountant looks at *your* feet.

Signed Conan the Bookkeeper

0 Replies

Source: Able2Know (2012)

Appendix 3

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)

1	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
2	Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
3	I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
4	Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
5	Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
6	I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
7	I dislike participating in group discussions.
8	I have no fear of giving a speech.
9	I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
10	I like to get involved in group discussions.
11	Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
12	I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
13	While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
14	Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
15	While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
16	I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
17	Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
18	Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.
19	I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
20	While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.
21	I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
22	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
23	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
24	I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.

Source: McCroskey (1982)

Appendix 4

Electronic Questionnaire Incorporating the PRCA-24 Completed by Students

Presentation Diagnostic

Complete this diagnostic to evaluate your oral communication skills.
Source: McCroskey, J. C. (1982). An introduction to rhetorical communication (4th Ed). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

*Required

Select as appropriate *

- ○ I give permission for my responses to be used for research in this module
- ○ I do not give permission for my responses to be used for research in this module

My name is *

My student ID is *

Complete your ID beginning with U and seven digits e.g. U1234567

My main language is *

Please give the language you speak most instictively

I am *

- ○ Female
- ○ Male

Complete this questionnaire about spoken communication. *

	1) Strongly Disagree	2) Disagree	3) Neutral	4) Agree	5) Strongly Agree
Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.	○	○	○	○	○
I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.	○	○	○	○	○
I am afraid to express myself at meetings.	○	○	○	○	○
I dislike participating in group discussions.	○	○	○	○	○

Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.	○	○	○	○	○
While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel relaxed while giving a speech.	○	○	○	○	○
I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.	○	○	○	○	○
Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.	○	○	○	○	○
I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.	○	○	○	○	○
Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.	○	○	○	○	○
Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	○	○	○	○	○

I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.	○	○	○	○	○
Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.	○	○	○	○	○
While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.	○	○	○	○	○
I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.	○	○	○	○	○
I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.	○	○	○	○	○
Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.	○	○	○	○	○
I like to get involved in group discussions.	○	○	○	○	○
I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.	○	○	○	○	○

My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.					
While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.					
I have no fear of giving a speech.					
Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.					

Please write about you experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations. *

In your response you should describe the situations and explain how you felt in them. If you have never spoken in front of an audience then you should simply write 'No experience'.

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Appendix 5

Reflection Form Completed by Students after Presentations

Reflection Form

Portfolio Section:	**Title:**

Requirements:

1) Insert your initial scores in the table below from your Tracking Form 1.
2) Insert a minimum of 5 new scores that relate to this specific exercise. This must include both strength and development areas.
3) Against the new scores indicate whether you feel they are a strength or development area.
4) From the new scores you have chosen you must reflect on two competencies one of which must be a development area.
5) When you have completed the table below transfer the new scores and reflections to Tracking Form 2.

Competency Self-Rating (I=Initial Score; N= New Score; S/D=Strength/Development Area; R=Area chosen for reflection)

COMPETENCY	I	N	S/D	R
Analysis				
Attention to Detail				
Judgement				
Influencing				
Interpersonal sensitivity				
Listening				
Planning & Organising				
Questioning				
Teamwork				
Written Communication				
Life Long Learning & Personal Development				

COMPETENCY	I	N	S/D	R
Professional Expertise				
Achievement Orientation				
Adaptability Flexibility				
Creativity				
Initiative				
Decisiveness				
Leadership				
Tolerance of Stress				
IT Technical Application/ Knowledge				
Managing your time effectively				
Commercial/Financial Awareness				

Description of the Event

I have chosen to reflect on ..... because

Reflection	
What happened? (Describe what happened when you participated in this event/exercise).	
Why did it happen (Make sure you explain in the context of the competences you have written above and include evidence)	
What were your feelings? (We are really looking for honesty here. Think about how you felt throughout the event/exercise – this may have been a positive or negative reaction or probably both).	
What did/can you learn from this event and what would you do differently in future? (Thinking about your comments above).	

Reference List: This is a list of sources (e.g. journal articles, books) which have been cited in this reflection. You must support both of the reflection areas with a minimum of two sources and use a minimum of four different sources in total.

By submitting this via Turnitin you confirm the above to be accurate reflections of the competency areas discussed and have updated tracking form part 2.

Appendix 6

Tests for Normal Distribution of PRCA-24 Data

a) Case Processing Summary

b) Pre-Intervention Data

c) Post-Intervention Data

d) Tests of Normality

e) Histograms for Pre-Intervention Data (Speech 1)

f) Histograms for Post-Intervention Data (Speech 3)

a) Case Processing Summary

		Valid Cases		Missing Cases		Total Cases	
INTERVENTION	YEAR	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pre-	2012/13	85	100.0	0	0.0	85	100.0
	2013/14	86	100.0	0	0.0	86	100.0
	2014/15	99	100.0	0	0.0	99	100.0
	2015/16	89	100.0	0	0.0	89	100.0
	2016/17	106	100.0	0	0.0	106	100.0
Post-	2012/13	85	100.0	0	0.0	85	100.0
	2013/14	86	100.0	0	0.0	86	100.0
	2014/15	99	100.0	0	0.0	99	100.0
	2015/16	89	100.0	0	0.0	89	100.0
	2016/17	106	100.0	0	0.0	106	100.0

b) Pre-intervention Data

YEAR		Mean	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		5% Trimmed Mean	Median	Variance	SD	Min	Max	Range	Interquartile Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound										
2012/13	Statistic	20.26	19.12	21.4	20.32	21	27.86	5.278	6	30	24	7	-0.2	-0.23
	SE	0.573											0.261	0.517
	z-value												**-0.77**	**-0.44**
2013/14	Statistic	20.16	19.24	21.08	20.11	20	18.35	4.284	11	30	19	6	0.18	-0.469
	SE	0.462											0.26	0.514
	z-value												**0.69**	**-0.91**
2014/15	Statistic	20.08	19.21	20.95	20.07	20	19.16	4.377	10	30	20	6	0.027	-0.378
	SE	0.44											0.243	0.481
	z-value												**0.11**	**-0.79**
2015/16	Statistic	19.79	18.82	20.75	19.71	20	20.852	4.566	11	30	19	7	0.217	-0.627
	SE	0.484											0.255	0.506
	z-value		19.42	21.05									**0.85**	**-1.24**
2016/17	Statistic	20.24			20.3	20	18.011	4.244	10	29	19	6	-0.165	-0.308
	SE	0.412											0.235	0.465
	z-value												**-0.7**	**-0.66**

C) Post-intervention Data

YEAR		Mean	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		5% Trimmed Mean	Median	Variance	SD	Min	Max	Range	Interquartile Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound										
2012/13	Statistic	18.54	17.54	19.54	18.57	18	21.37	4.623	6	29	23	7	-0.048	-0.332
	SE	0.501											0.261	0.517
	z-value												**-0.18**	**-0.64**
2013/14	Statistic	18.22	17.22	19.22	18.32	19	21.868	4.676	7	29	22	6	-0.287	-0.184
	SE	0.504											0.26	0.514
	z-value												**-1.10**	**-0.36**
2014/15	Statistic	18.2	17.21	19.19	18.19	18	24.693	4.969	6	29	23	7	0.061	-0.224
	SE	0.499											0.243	0.481
	z-value												**0.25**	**-0.47**
2015/16	Statistic	17.73	16.71	18.75	17.71	18	23.336	4.831	7	28	21	8	0.13	-0.764
	SE	0.512											0.255	0.506
	z-value												**0.51**	**-1.51**
2016/17	Statistic	17.75	16.99	18.51	17.78	18	15.582	3.947	8	28	20	5	-0.095	-0.019
	SE	0.383											0.235	0.465
	z-value												**-0.40**	**-0.04**

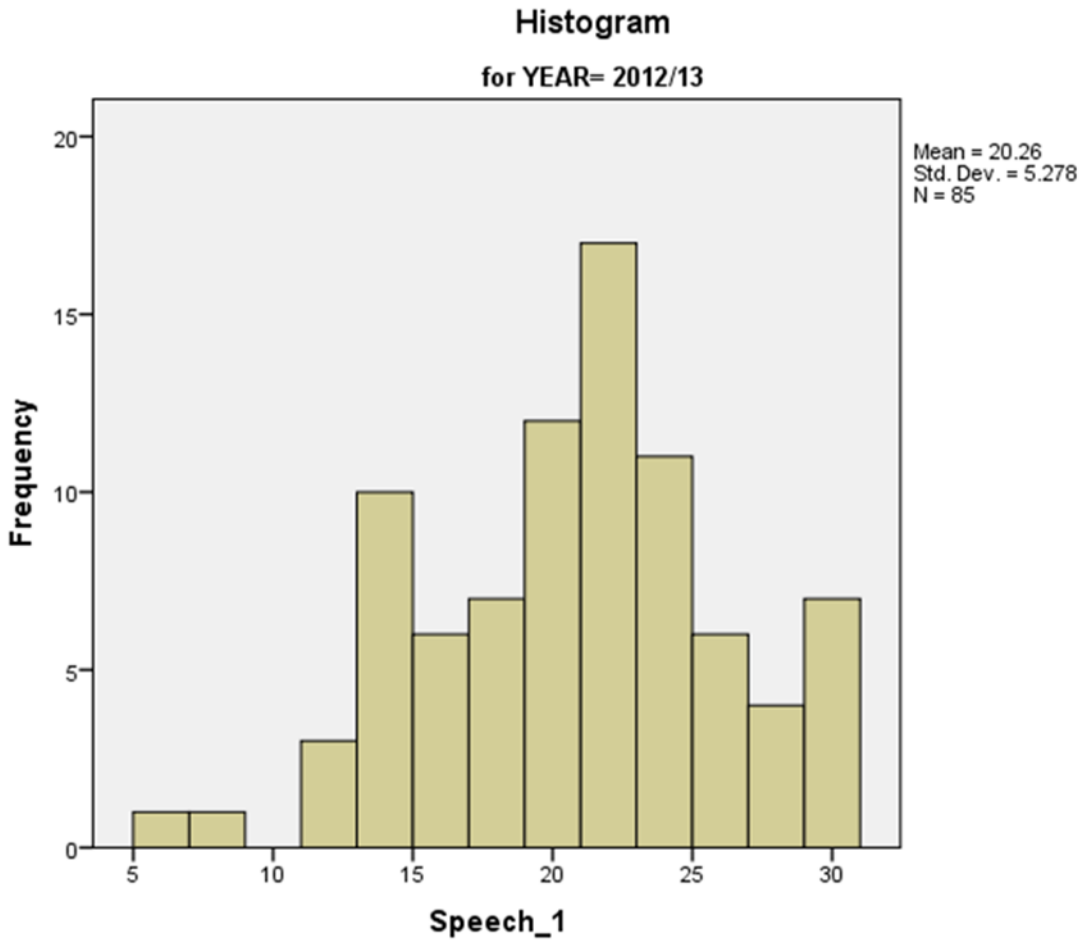
d) Tests of Normality

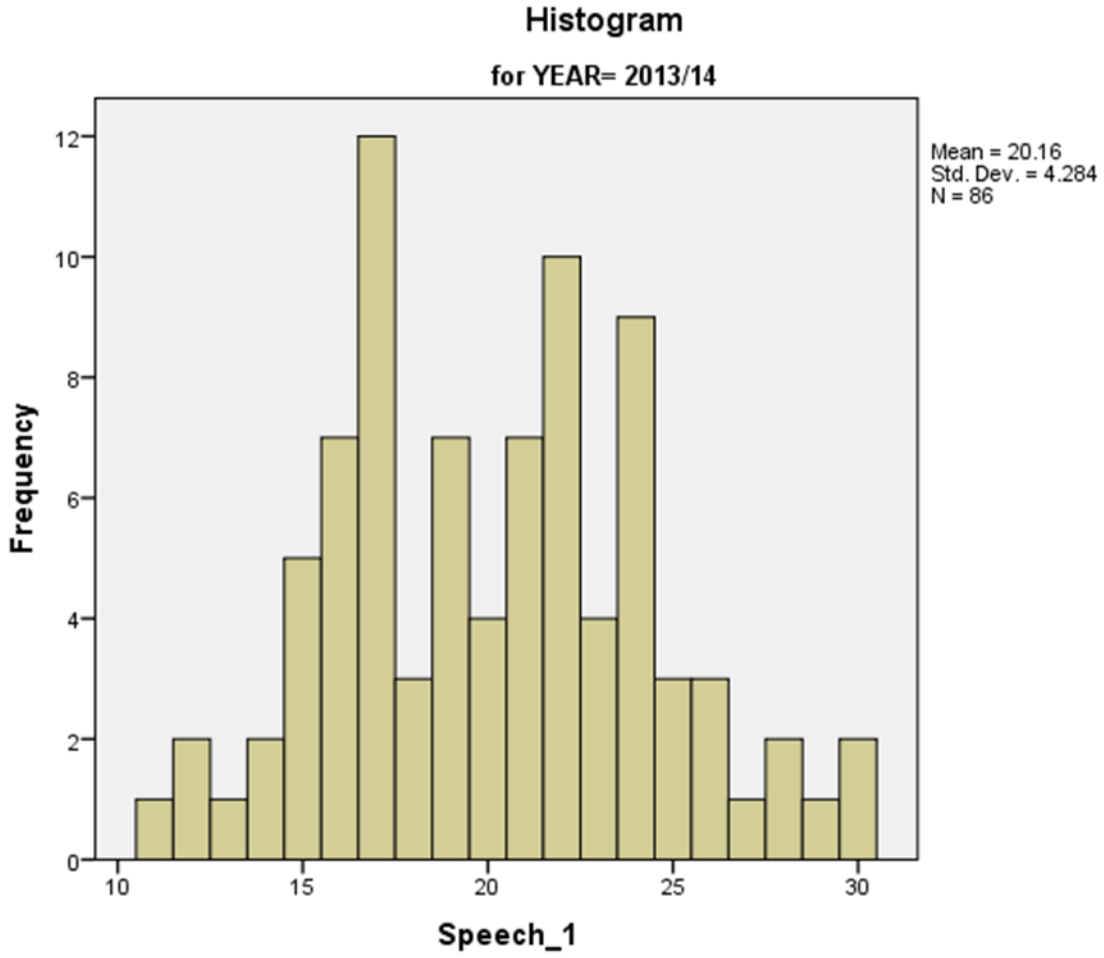
INTERVENTION	YEAR	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
		Statistic	df	Significance
Pre-	2012/13	.092	85	.071
	2013/14	.119	86	.004
	2014/15	.072	99	.200*
	2015/16	.079	89	.200*
	2016/17	.074	106	.185
Post-	2012/13	.082	85	.200*
	2013/14	.083	86	.200*
	2014/15	.066	99	.200*
	2015/16	.107	89	.013
	2016/17	.073	106	.200*

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

e) Histograms for Pre-Intervention Data




Histogram
for YEAR= 2013/14
Mean = 20.16
Std. Dev. = 4.284
N = 86
Frequency
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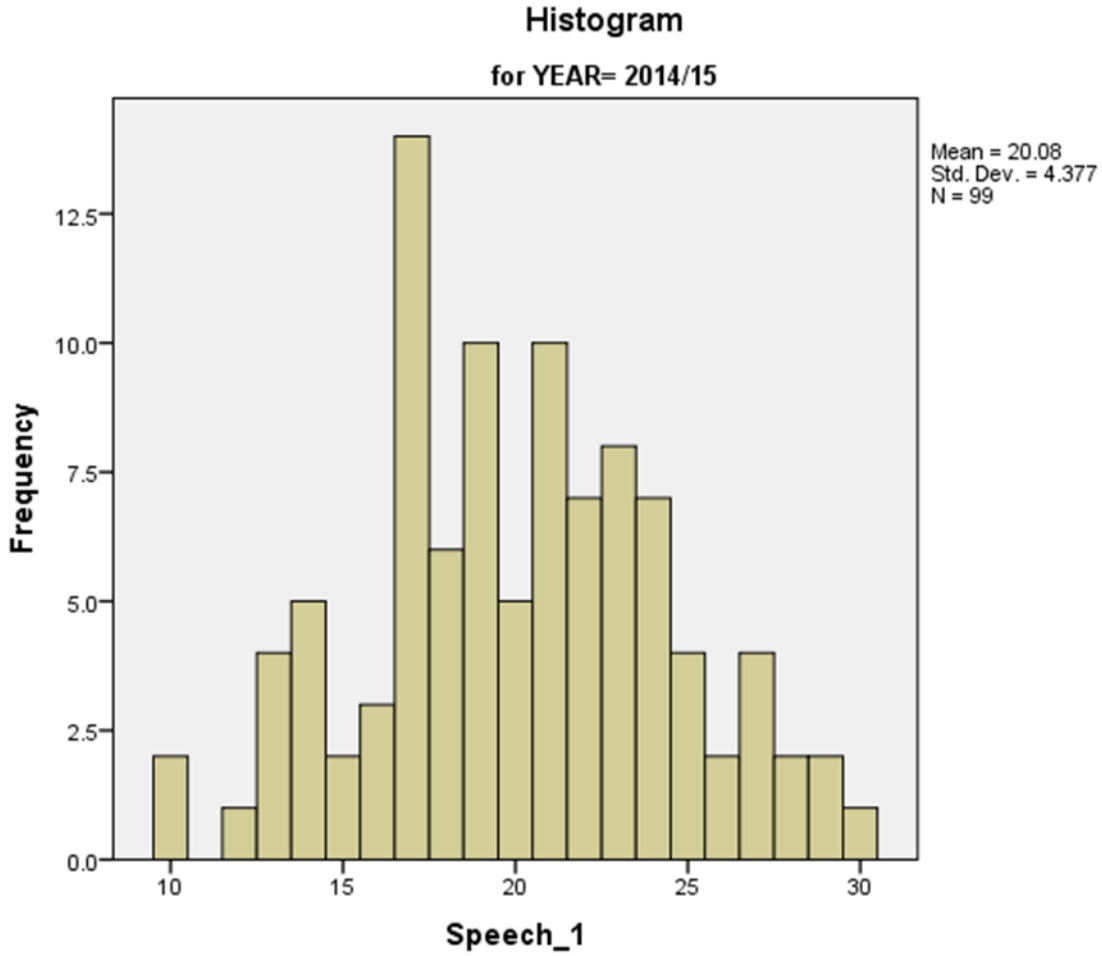
4
6
8
10
12
10
15
20
25
30
Speech_1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for YEAR= 2014/15
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Std. Dev. = 4.377
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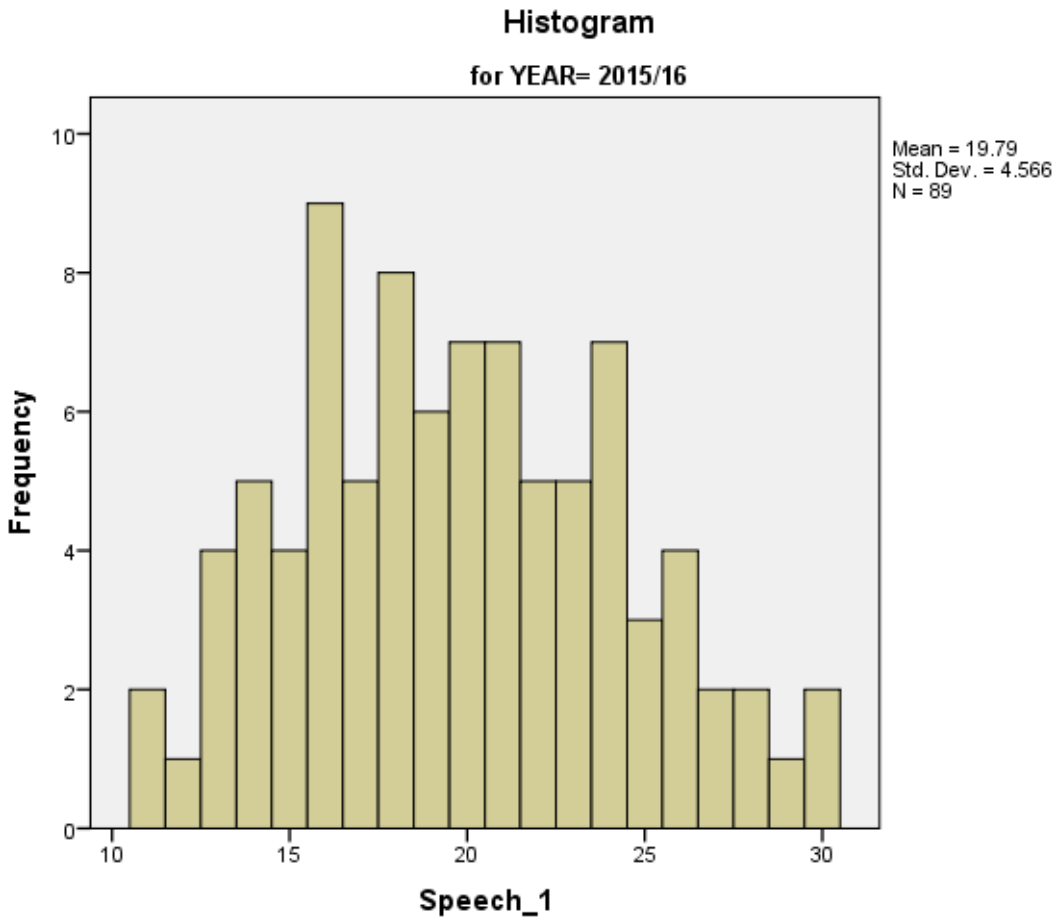
7.5
5.0
2.5
0.0
10
15
20
25
30
Speech_1


Histogram
for YEAR= 2015/16
Mean = 19.79
Std. Dev. = 4.566
N = 89
Frequency
Speech_1
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2
4
6
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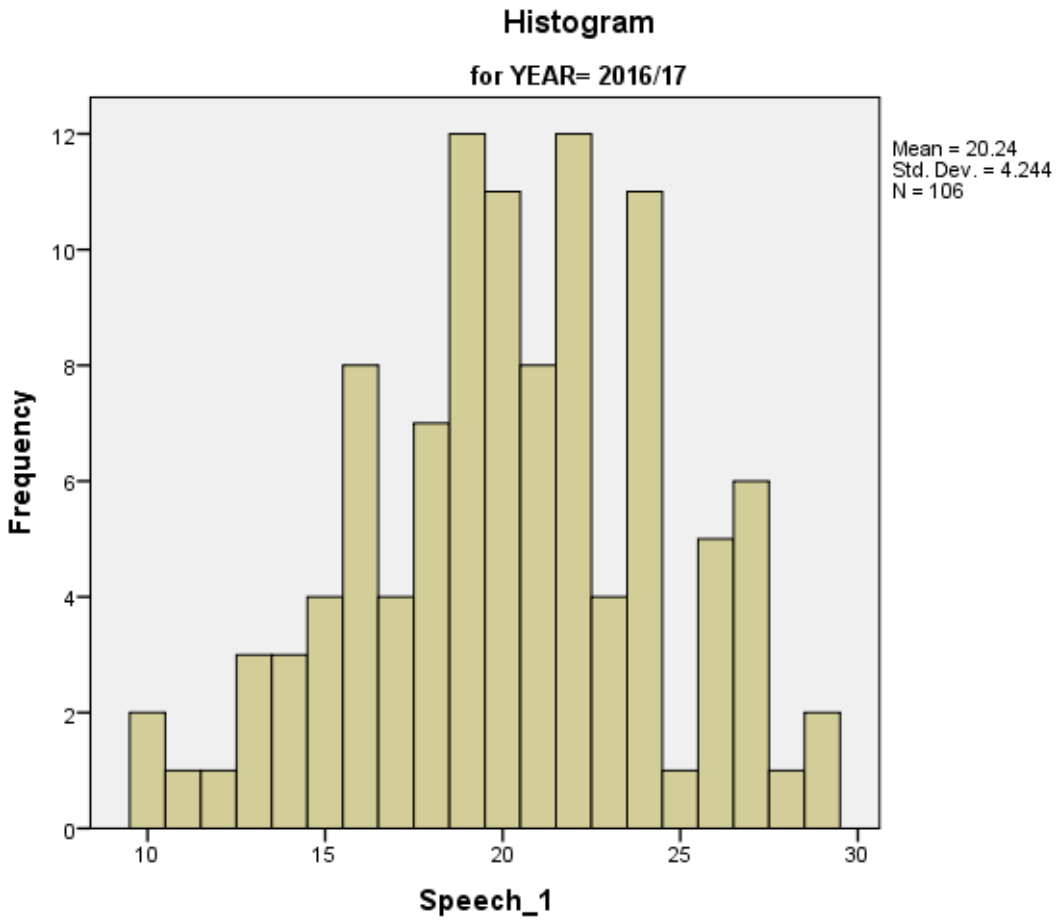
10
10
15
20
25
30


Histogram
for YEAR= 2016/17
Mean = 20.24
Std. Dev. = 4.244
N = 106
Frequency
Speech_1
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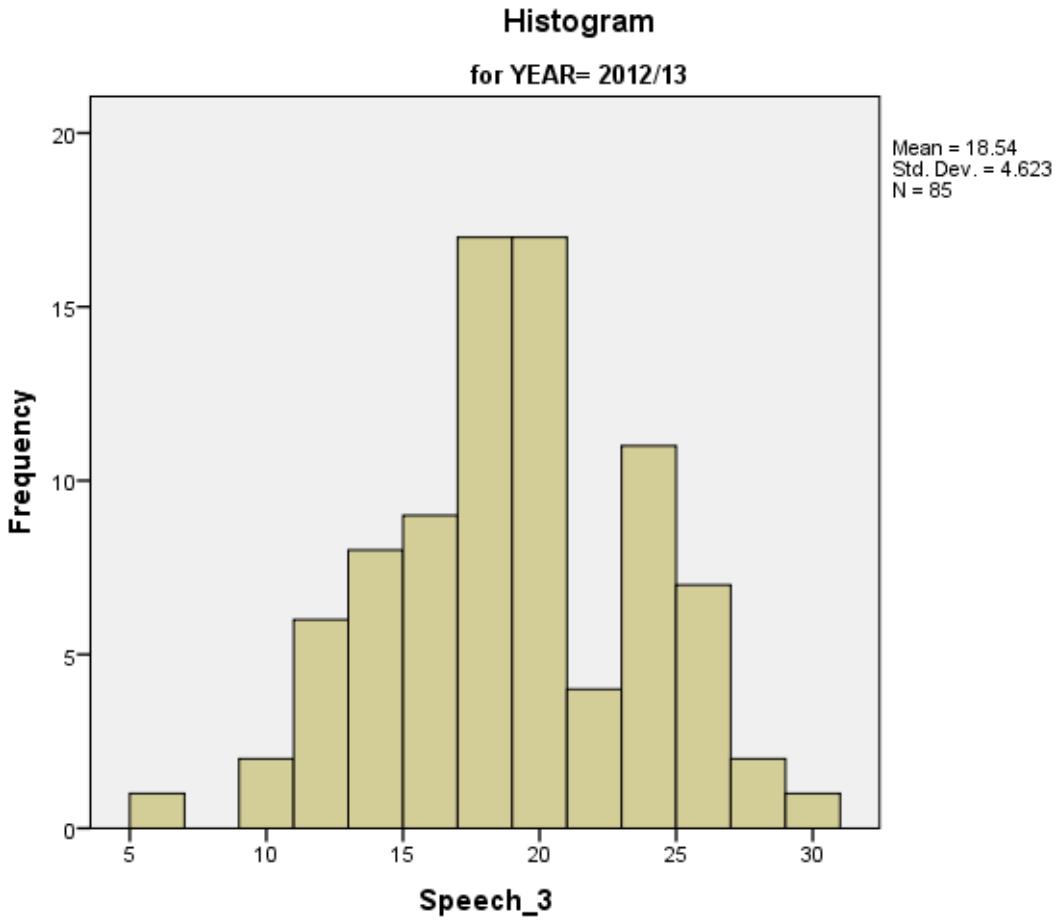
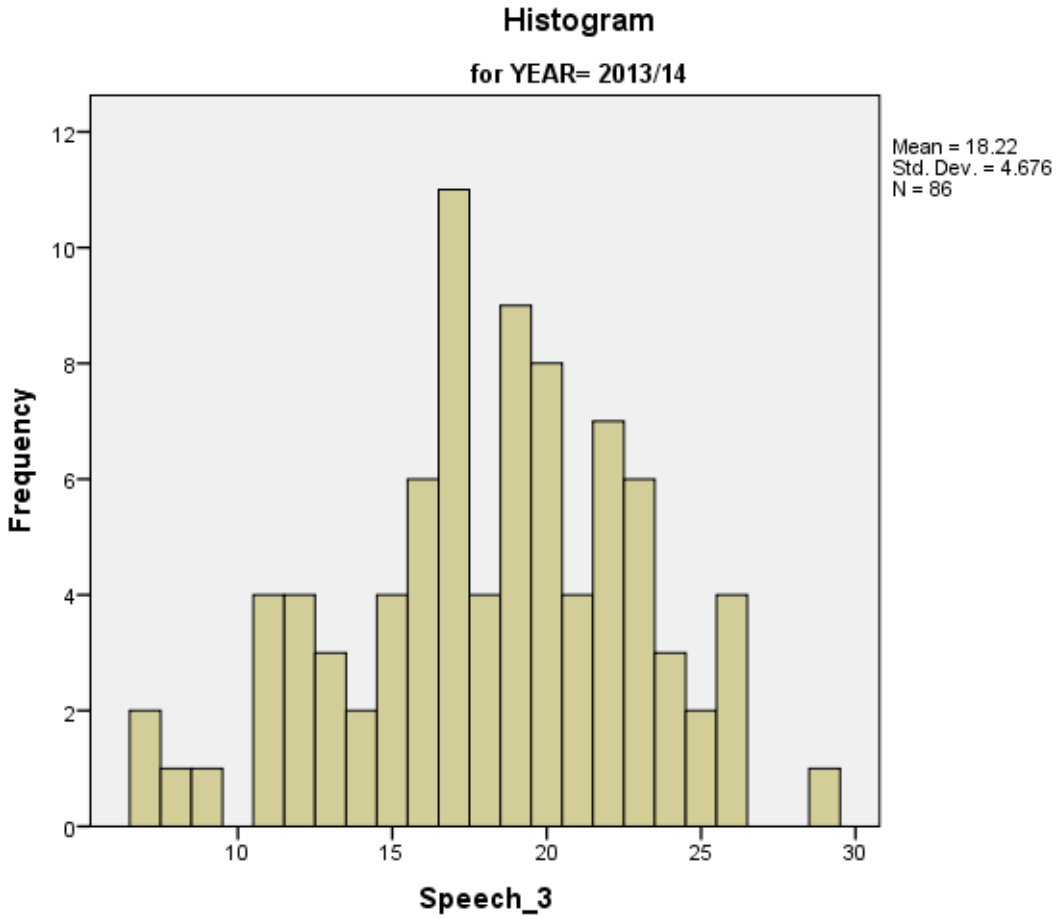
2
4
6
8
10
12
10
15
20
25
30

f) Histograms for Post-Intervention Data




Histogram
for YEAR= 2013/14
Mean = 18.22
Std. Dev. = 4.676
N = 86
Frequency
Speech_3
0
2
4
6
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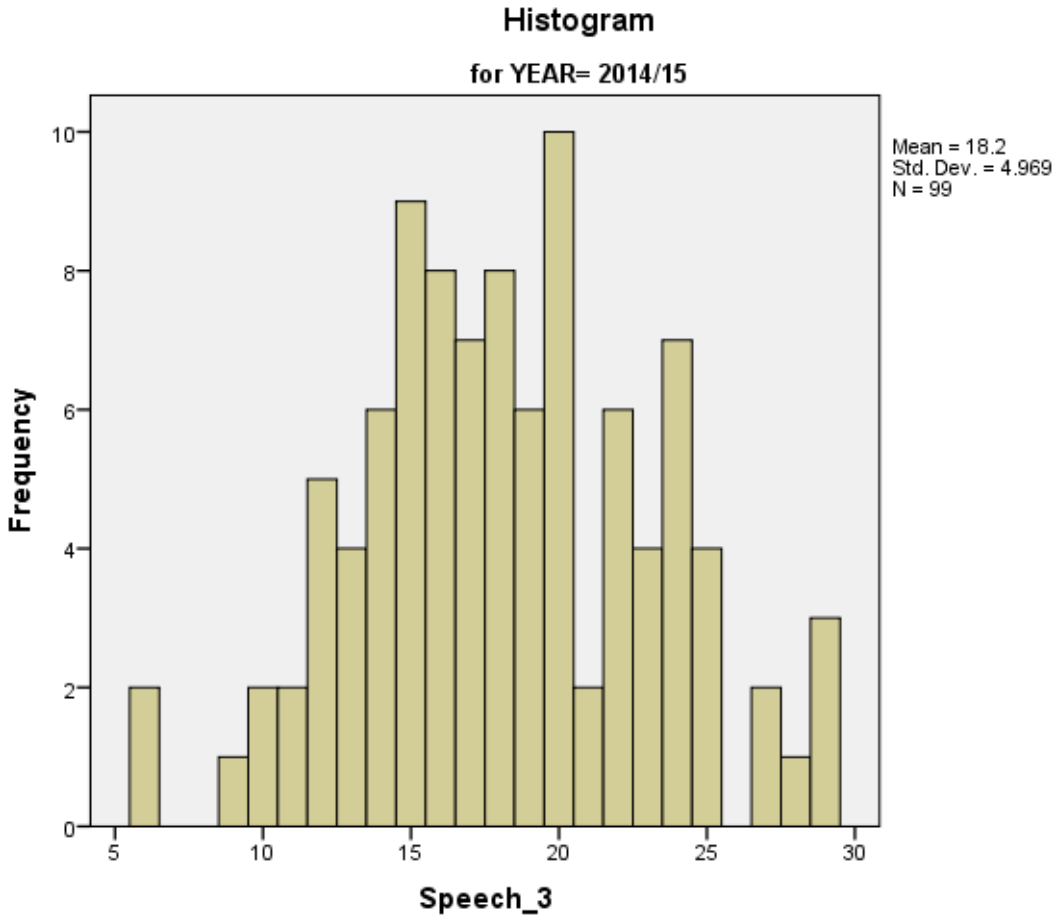
12
10
15
20
25
30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for YEAR= 2014/15
Mean = 18.2
Std. Dev. = 4.969
N = 99
Frequency
Speech_3
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2
4
6
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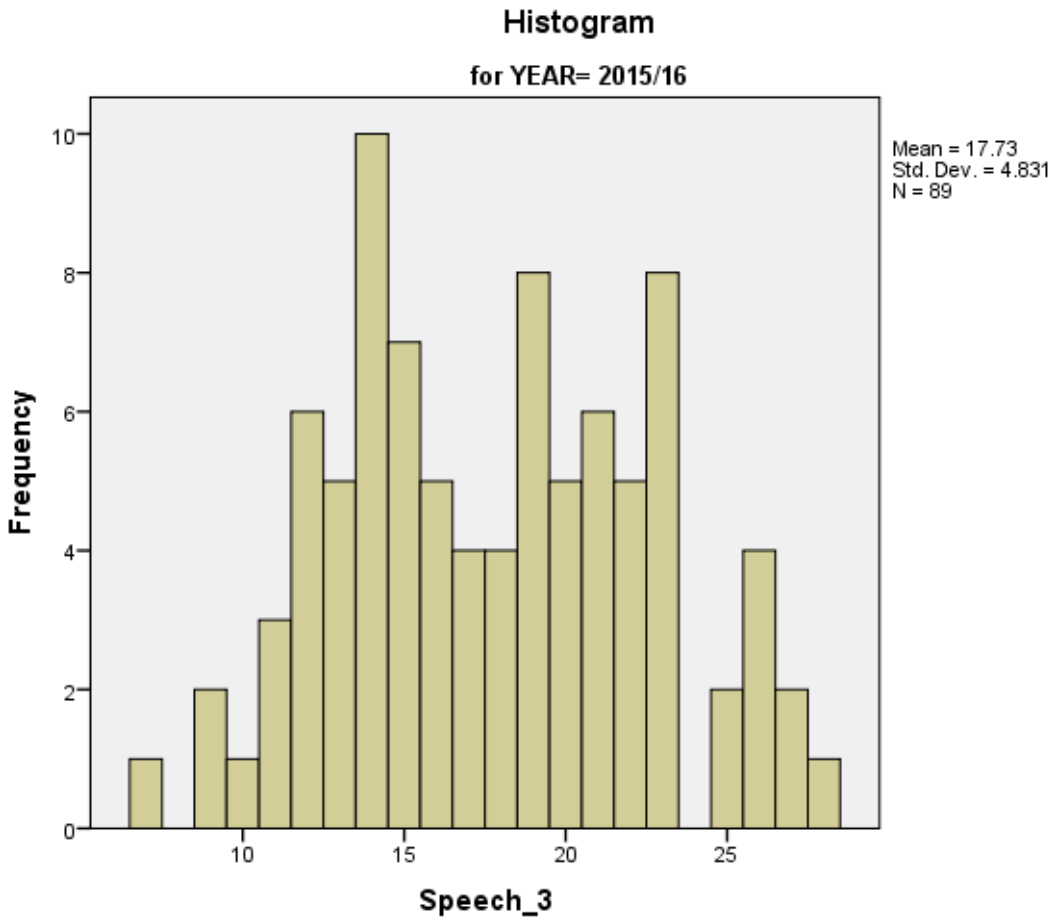
5
10
15
20
25
30


Histogram
for YEAR= 2015/16
Mean = 17.73
Std. Dev. = 4.831
N = 89
Frequency
Speech_3
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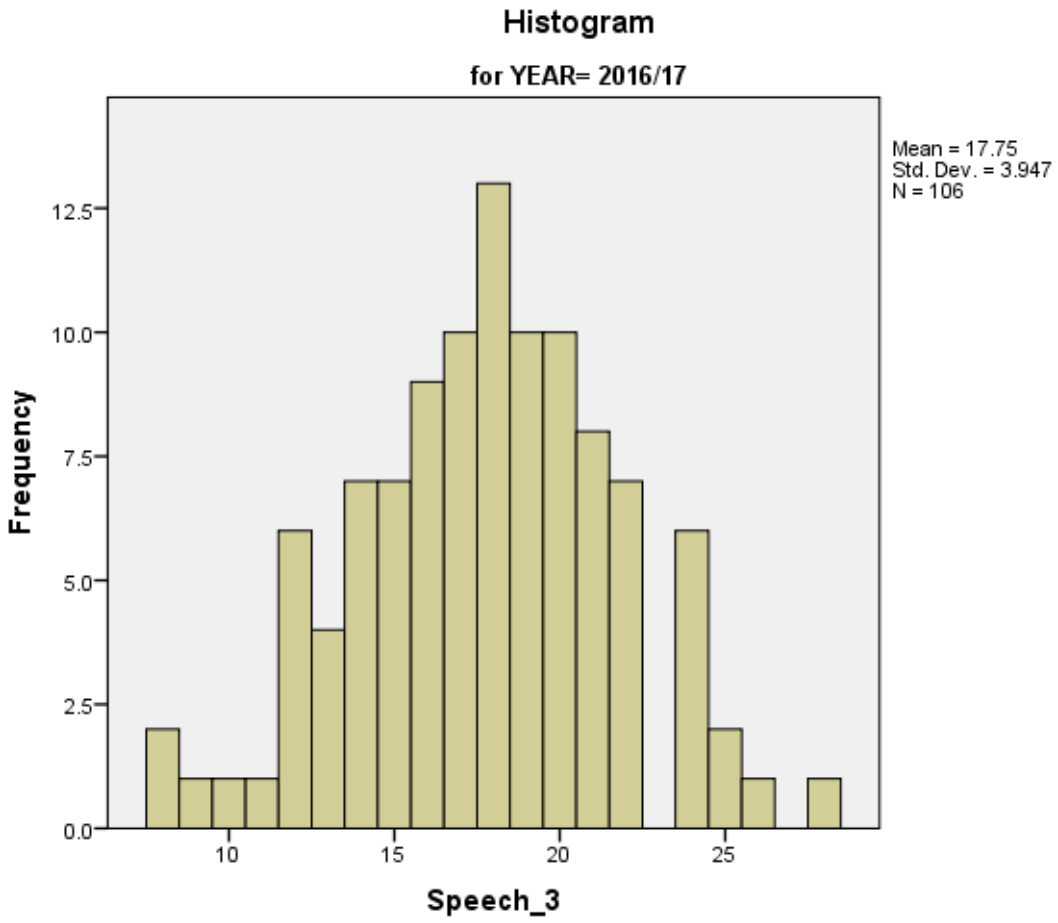
2
4
6
8
10
10
15
20
25


Histogram
for YEAR= 2016/17
Mean = 17.75
Std. Dev. = 3.947
N = 106
Frequency
12.5
10.0
7.5
5.0
2.5
0.0
10
15
20
25
Speech_3

Appendix 7

Reliability of the Public Speaking Sub-Section of the PRCA-24

a. **Case Processing Summary**
b. **Reliability Statistics**
c. **Item Statistics**
d. **Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**
e. **Summary Item Statistics**
f. **Item-Total Statistics**
g. **Scale Statistics**

a. Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1066	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	1066	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

b. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.862	.864	6

c. Item Statistics

	Mean	S	N
I feel relaxed while giving a speech	2.56	.929	1066
I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence	2.90	.896	1066
I have no fear of giving a speech	2.52	.964	1066
Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech*	2.83	1.079	1066
While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know*	3.10	1.100	1066
My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech*	3.01	1.032	1066

d. Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	I feel relaxed while giving a speech	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence	I have no fear of giving a speech	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech*	While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know*	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech*
I feel relaxed while giving a speech	1.000	.571	.610	.552	.472	.514
I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence	.571	1.000	.540	.432	.452	.461
I have no fear of giving a speech	.610	.540	1.000	.461	.416	.468
Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech*	.552	.432	.461	1.000	.525	.543
While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know*	.472	.452	.416	.525	1.000	.687
My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech*	.514	.461	.468	.543	.687	1.000

e. Summary Item Statistics

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	.514	.416	.687	.271	1.650	.005	6

f. Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I feel relaxed while giving a speech	14.37	15.472	.698	.525	.832
I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence	14.03	16.171	.619	.417	.846
I have no fear of giving a speech	14.41	15.703	.628	.449	.844
Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech*	14.09	14.910	.643	.427	.842
While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know*	13.82	14.679	.658	.519	.839
My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech*	13.91	14.832	.697	.547	.831

g. Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
16.93	21.433	4.630	6

Appendix 8

Studies Using the PRCA-24 Questionnaire

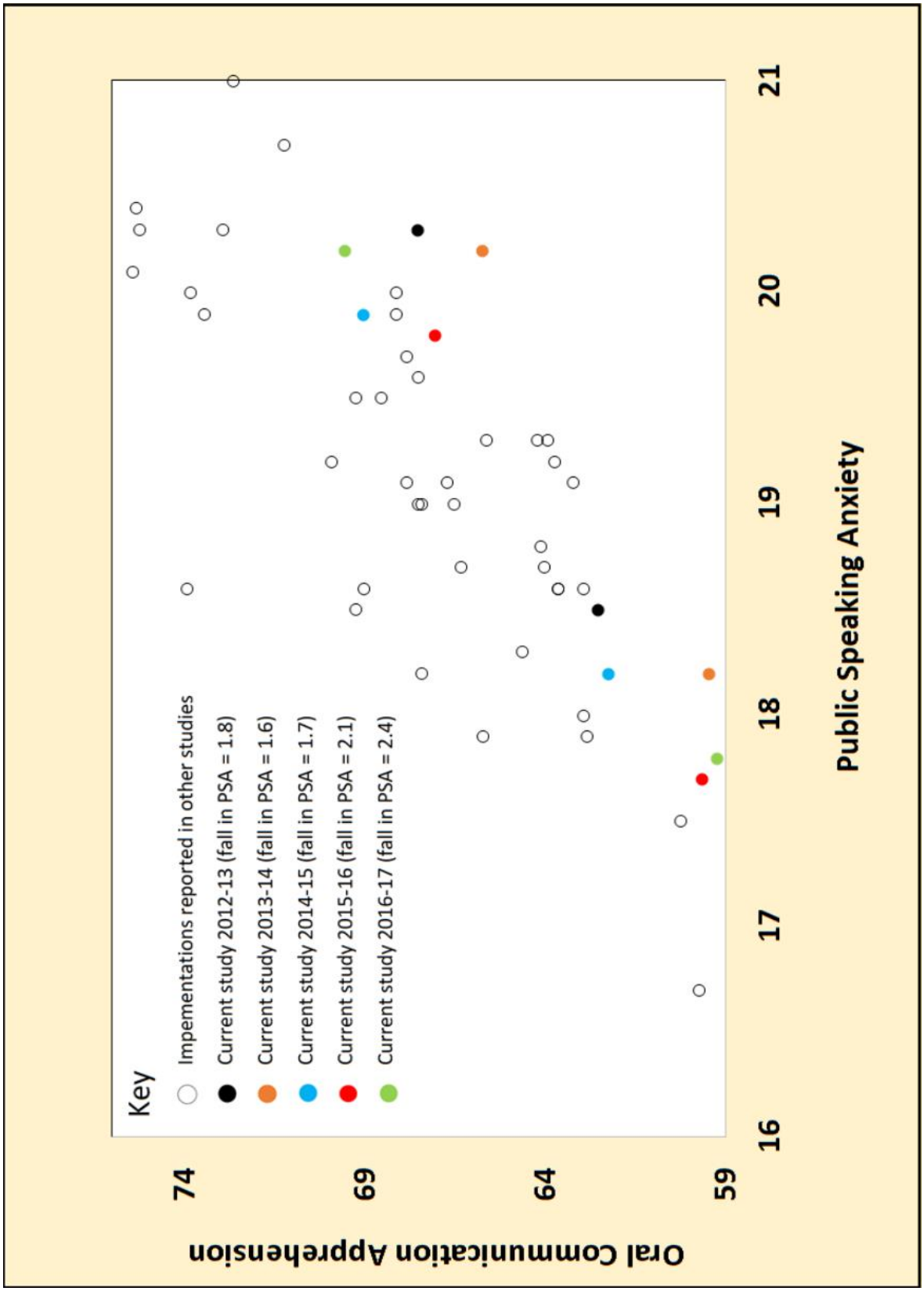
Table sorted in descending order by apprehension for public speaking

Rank	Study	Year	Nation	Participants	Dyad	Group	Meeting	Public	Overall	Notes
1	Warnock & Curtis	1997	Ireland	83	14.6	18.1	18.9	21	72.6	3rd Year Accounting
2	Hsu	2004	Taiwan	298	16.1	16.4	18	20.7	71.2	General
3	Foo & Ong	2013	Malaysia	311	17.2	16.3	21.4	20.4	75.3	1st Year Accounting
4	Current Study	2012-13 pre	UK	85	15.9	15.5	15.8	20.3	67.5	1st Year Accounting Pre-Intervention
5	Foo & Ong	2013	Malaysia	129	16.2	15.7	21	20.3	72.9	1st Year Business
6	Foo & Ong	2013	Malaysia	178	16.6	16.6	21.8	20.3	75.2	2nd Year Accounting
7	Current Study	2016-17 pre	UK	107	15.9	15.7	17.6	20.2	69.5	1st Year Accounting Pre-Intervention
8	Current Study	2013-14 pre	UK	86	14.7	14.1	16.7	20.2	65.7	1st Year Accounting Pre-Intervention
9	Foo & Ong	2013	Malaysia	235	17.5	16.4	21.4	20.1	75.4	2nd Year Business
10	Simons et al.	1995	USA	233	14.8	16.3	17	20	68.1	Sophomores studying Accounting
11	Foo & Ong	2013	Malaysia	125	16.7	16.2	21.2	20	73.8	3rd Year Accounting
12	Current Study	2014-15 pre	UK	99	16	15.5	17.6	19.9	69	1st Year Accounting Pre-Intervention
13	Foo & Ong	2013	Malaysia	98	16.8	15.9	20.7	19.9	73.4	3rd Year Business
14	Hassall et al.	2000	Spain	235	13	15.1	20.1	19.9	68.1	Business Admin
15	Miller & Stone	2009	USA	73	14.76	14.36	16.08	19.84	65.04	Masters of Accountancy pre-intervention
16	Current Study	2015-16 pre	UK	96	15.8	14.7	16.8	19.8	67	1st Year Accounting Pre-Intervention
17	Arquero et al.	2007	Spain	235	13.1	15.2	19.9	19.7	67.8	Accounting
18	Stanga & Ladd	1990	US	161	15	16	17	19.6	67.5	Accounting majors on introductory accounting course

19	Aly & Islam	2003	Canada		15.5	16.4	17.8	19.5	69.2	Accounting
20	Gardner et al.	2005	New Zealand	181	15	15.8	18.2	19.5	68.5	1st Year Accounting
21	McCroskey	1984	US	25, 000	14.5	15.4	16.4	19.3	65.6	US National Norm
22	Hassall et al.	2005	UK	380	13.4	13.9	17.7	19.3	64.2	Business
23	Hassall et al.	2000	UK	380	13.3	13.6	17.7	19.3	63.9	Business
24	Arquero et al.	2007	UK	380	13.3	13.7	17.5	19.2	63.7	Non-Accounting
25	Ameen et al.	2010	USA	78	16.2	17.2	17.4	19.2	69.9	1998 Accounting majors taking foundation accounting
26	Arquero et al.	2007	UK	236	15	14.8	18.9	19.1	67.8	Accounting
27	Ameen et al.	2010	USA	95	15	16.1	16.4	19.1	66.7	2006 Non-Business majors taking foundation accounting
28	1	2011	Ireland		13.6	14.6	16.1	19.1	63.2	1st Year Business
29	Hassall et al.	2005	UK	100	14.9	14.7	18.8	19	67.4	Accounting
30	Hassall et al.	2000	UK	236	15	14.7	18.8	19	67.5	Accounting
31	Ameen et al.	2010	USA	398	15.1	15.5	16.9	19	66.5	1998 Other Business majors taking foundation accounting
32	Stanga & Ladd	1990	US	845	14.2	15	16	18.8	64.1	Business students on introductory accounting course
33	Arquero et al.	2007	Spain	338	12.1	14.6	18.6	18.7	64	Non-Accounting
34	Ameen et al.	2010	USA	45	15.4	16.1	16	18.7	66.3	2006 Accounting majors taking foundation accounting
35	P'Rayan & Shetty	2008	India	120	16.8	15.9	18.1	18.6	69	Engineering
36	Simons et al.	1995	USA	640	13.8	14.7	15.8	18.6	62.9	Sophomores studying other Business subjects
37	Byrne et al.	2009	Ireland	34	13.9	14.6	16.5	18.6	63.6	
38	Ilias et al.	2013	Malaysia	179	18.2	18.4	18.7	18.6	73.9	Final Year Accounting
39	Shanahan	2011	Ireland		13.9	14.6	16.5	18.6	63.6	1st Year Accounting
40	Gardner et al.	2005	New Zealand	67	15	15.8	19.9	18.5	69.2	1st Year Business
41	Current Study	2012-13 post	UK	85	14.6	14.2	15.2	18.5	62.5	1st Year Accounting Post-Intervention
42	Ameen et al.	2010	USA	102	14.7	15.5	16	18.3	64.6	1998 Non-Business majors taking foundation accounting

43	Gardner et al.	2005	New Zealand	96	13.9	15.1	20.2	18.2	67.4	3rd Year Accounting
44	Current Study	2013-14 post	UK	86	13.9	13.1	14.1	18.2	59.4	1st Year Accounting Post-Intervention
45	Current Study	2014-15 post	UK	99	14.7	14.1	15.2	18.2	62.2	1st Year Accounting Post-Intervention
46	Ameen et al.	2010	USA	182	14.3	14.7	15.8	18	62.9	2006 Other Business majors taking foundation accounting
47	Ruchala & Hill	1994	US	43	13.7	14.7	16.5	17.9	62.8	Accounting seniors (pre-test) 43
48	Hassall et al.	2005	UK	100	12.3	15	17.5	17.9	65.7	Engineering
49	Current Study	2016-17 post	UK	107	14.1	13.2	14.1	17.8	59.2	1st Year Accounting Post-Intervention
50	Miller & Stone	2009	USA	73	13.66	13.68	15.16	17.68	60.18	Masters of Accountancy post-intervention
51	Current Study	2015-16 post	UK	96	14.1	13.6	14.2	17.7	59.6	1st Year Accounting Post-Intervention
52	Ruchala & Hill	1994	US	21	12.7	14.7	15.3	17.5	60.2	Accounting seniors control group (post-test) 21
53	Hsu	2004	USA	320	13.7	13.7	15.6	16.7	59.7	General
54	Coetzee et al.	2014	South Africa	337	12.3	13.8	15.2	15	56.2	2nd Year Accounting
55	Ruchala & Hill	1994	US	22	12.1	14.1	15.2	14.7	56.1	Accounting seniors class subjects (post-test) 22

Graph showing OCA and PSA levels of previous studies and cohorts from the current study.



Appendix 9

Data from the Initial Questionnaire Administered with the 2015/16 Cohort

The questionnaire includes the PRCA-24 questionnaire and comments concerning previous experience of presenting.

Public Speaking Element of PRCA-24	TOTAL PRCA-24	Language	Gender	Please write about your experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations.	Category
24	72	English	Female	I haven't had to participate in many presentations, the most recent probably being two years ago. I feel nervous as I know larger audiences result in mixed personalities, making it harder to know how to engage and explain. Also with slight stage fright the feeling of multiple people staring at me seems very off-putting.	Negative
22	73	Not English	Male	I did some presentation in front of students, I was a little bit nervous also sometimes forget some facts	Negative
19	71	Not English	Male	Last year, in the foundation year, we had a couple of presentations. Even though i felt extreme nervousness in each one, i tried hard not to show it, and use hand gestures to seem more confident	Negative
18	80	Not English	Male	Yes, I have experience. When I was studying international foundation year at university, I did some personal and group presentations in front of my classmate and other class's students. In addition, I did a presentation which was about "why do you want to be a representative" in front of the head office	Negative

				manager of the international study centre. I think, I found my problem that I need to fix or improve which is I am afraid of doing a mistake during the presentation.	
23	78	English	Female	I am usually very nervous when giving class presentation or speaking to an audience.	Negative
23	84	English	Male	i have done an presentation recently for business at the end of the school year of 2015. Although, i must emphasise that this experience was overwhelming and scary and i was told that i was speaking too fast because the nerves got the better of me.	Negative
29	72	English	Female	At college I had to prepare a short presentation for a game that I had developed. I had to present the game to my teacher on my own. I felt very nervous about giving the presentation. I prefer to do a group presentation than a presentation on my own.	Negative
22	63	English	Female	I have presented in front of my classmates in high school and sixth form. I have never presented on my own, mostly in a small group. In these situations I feel nervous, unless I know the people I am presenting in front of very well.	Negative
20	61	English	Male	i have been involved in class presentations in college. i feel uncomfortable as i am not quite confident at presenting presentations.	Negative
24	73	English	Male	The experience that I have had in giving class presentations, include me becoming nervous, and missing out information as I tend to forget what I am supposed to say.	Negative

30	82	English	Male	I have experience of speaking in front of my class for various presentations. I felt extremely nervous and anxious which caused me to try rush through the presentations.	Negative
30	75	English	Male	In the past i have had pretty bad experiences while giving presentations due to the fact that i become overly nervous to the point where i feel sick, i do eventually get my point across but to do so i experience extreme nerves, sickness feeling and shaky knees.	Negative
23	94	English	Male	I have had to do a few presentations and speeches in front of classmates at high school and college. I have struggled when doing the speeches and presentations because I lack confidence and speaking in front of people makes me nervous. When doing the presentations, I feel tense and nervous because it feels as though people are judging what you have to say.	Negative
27	99	English	Male	During presentations i usually feel quite nervous. I feel like i will mess up my words or forget what I have to say and look foolish in front of my peers.	Negative
21	62	English	Female	I have given class presentations before, some of which were formal. For example, I had to pitch a presentation about a new product that I have created. Within this presentation I had to explain to the class what my product was, how it differed from other products that were similar to mine and inform them of my target audience and selling price and justify	Negative

				why my product idea would be successful using my target audience and selling price. During this presentation I had to speak formally and was nervous as I was being assessed on both my product and my presentation style. I then had to ask if they had any questions. I found a few of the questions difficult to answer as I had not considered I would be asked those questions. Another presentation I had to give was to the board of governors about a trip to Auschwitz me and my partner went on. We decided to inform them of what we learnt when we went to Auschwitz and why it is useful/important for future students to get the chance to go there and feel what we did as well as why it is important to remember the holocaust and learn from it. I felt quite nervous at first, but once we started the PowerPoint I felt very sad about the tragedies and murders that occurred at Auschwitz and other concentration camps.	
20	79	English	Male	I don't have much experience but the experience i have is very limited. It has involved me speaking as part of a group presentation where we are each assigned a task to talk about. When delivering this presentation i was very nervous but prepared well before hand so i knew what i was doing	Negative
26	96	English	Male	I have occasionally done class presentations whilst at college and high school. I often forget the facts that i have memorised when speaking in front of the class.	Negative

20	79	English	Male	When I was in high school and I had to give a presentation on health and safety which I was in a group of four people. This was done in front of the working staff and other groups of students and I felt nervous when I was standing up and talking to the audience.	Negative
14	46	English	Female	I have rarely had to give class presentations while at college and school, but when i have i have been okay when in front of people i know but do get a little nervous at first when it is in front of strangers	Negative
26	78	English	Male	Whilst doing a class presentation at high school I became very nervous and forgot most of the facts that I had learnt in relation to the subject in which I was speaking about.	Negative
22	87	English	Male	In the last year of high school we had to do a presentation in front of 2 teachers and a group of 4 students. This is the only time I have spoken in front of an audience and wasn't comfortable doing so.	Negative
25	89	English	Male	I have only ever given a class presentation once. I felt nervous and under pressure to produce a good presentation and as a result forgot some parts of information I intended to put across.	Negative
28	95	English	Male	I had to give a presentation to five people for my EPQ. The day before the presentation i was feeling nervous and my confidence was low. I was well prepared, however as i was nervous in the presentation, i made a few errors in my speech (stuttering etc). I was concentrating more on what people were thinking of me throughout the	Negative

				presentation. The result for my EPQ was a B and i felt my presentation skills may have let me down in achieving a better grade.	
21	87	English	Male	I find it very difficult, I sometimes start to shake and do not make eye contact with anyone but look at the wall instead	Negative
20	62	English	Male	I participated in a class presentation with a group of students and felt nervous as I didn't feel the work was good enough.	Negative
25	73	Not English	Female	I felt nervous on giving presentations or speaking as sometimes I can forget about I should say .	Negative
22	68	English	Male	I have spoken only a few times formally in front of a group of students, this was for GCSE English. I was nervous and did not enjoy the experience.	Negative
24	83	English	Male	I have presented in front of a class of students which i know well a few times. However i don't feel confident a lot of the time, and I can get quite nervous whilst doing them.	Negative
22	78	English	Male	nervous, not being able to start but when I do I cannot stop.	Negative
20	83	English	Male	I have done some presentations for GCSE English Language and they make me very nervous as I have to focus on many factors from remembering on what I have to say, to delivering it in a way that is clear and precise and also trying not to be phased out by the on looking audience.	Negative
27	95	English	Male	One of my biggest weakness is speaking in front of people, i feel nervous and tensed.	Negative
22	83	English	Male	I Was really afraid and nervous because i never often give a class presentation before. sometimes i think that i	Negative

				might be saying the wrong facts or things	
20	65	English	Male	My experience of giving class presentations is that I do not really enjoy them, I do not hate them but would prefer not to do them. I do not know how to use presentation skills effectively.	Negative
30	91	English	Female	when presenting a presentation to an audience I tend to become very nervous as I am not very confident when it comes to public speaking. it makes me feel that I don't want to do it as I feel very anxious.	Negative
26	84	Not English	Female	When giving class presentations, I feel nervous.	Negative
21	71	English	Male	I usually feel nervous when i have to give class presentations, as i don't want to look stupid or make mistakes. I have given class presentations at college, mostly during business class. Speaking in front of people makes me feel quite nervous, and i feel embarrassed when stood talking in front of groups of people.	Negative
16	57	Not English	Male	I have given multiple presentations in school and previous university. I have even represented my school in international projects (it took place in Belgium). Although I have plenty of experience giving presentations in front of people I still feel little nervous because I am afraid to mess up my presentation or do something wrong as I believe that when you are giving a presentation everything should be perfect and made without any mistakes.	Negative
16	53	English	Male	Whilst studying A levels I was required from time to time to produce	Neutral

				presentations on a certain topic and present it to the class. These were not marked or graded, instead they were to help each other learn.	
11	48	English	Male	During my first year whilst doing sports journalism we were assigned to each produce and present a presentation each month therefore I learnt from this.	Neutral
13	50	English	Male	I am a musician. I sing and play acoustic guitar as a solo artist in front of all different types of people e.g. wedding anniversary.	Neutral
22	83	English	Male	i have given a group presentation in front of thorntons directors about their problem they gave to my group to do	Neutral
16	60	Not English	Female	More body language attract listener	Neutral
21	81	Not English	Male	Yes I set up some presentation in my foundation year, for example, I have done a presentation in English language subject about the food and tourism in Britain as well as I have done a presentation in investigates business subject about British Airways.	Neutral
16	51	English	Male	Doing my extended project, although it was not business related, it involved doing a 20 minute presentation that was based on a 6000 word dissertation, out of 10 marks i received 8 and learned a load about how a power point presentation should be both presented and delivered.	Neutral
19	67	English	Male	I have rarely have done presentations in class. The only times was in college on my BTEC level 3 extended diploma where I had to do a couple of presentations for specific modules.	Neutral

17	57	English	Male	We used to be assigned topics to present on in college to the tutor class. You would get together in a group and figure out what to present on and what information to include on the topic after researching it ourselves. Presentations were not very long and thought that we could probably do better	Neutral
21	61	English	Male	my experience comes from Young Enterprise where we set up our own business and had to pitch out ideas to the rest of the group and whichever is the best idea, we make a business out of it. Which ultimately turned out to be candles.	Neutral
21	60	English	Male	I have had to do several presentations during 6th form in Law and History. I had to work in groups mostly but a couple of times were on my own and we had to present our findings to the rest of the class.	Neutral
18	59	English	Male	The experience that I have had in giving class presentations is that they have improved by doing more presentation, and it has also helped to just be myself and not follow presentation notes word for word.	Neutral
16	62	English	Male	During my A-levels I had to present a presentation in front of a banker and head of the business studies teacher. This was a short presentation of our product which we designed.	Neutral
20	60	English	Female	i haven't got any experience of presenting in front of a group however I have presented in front of teachers at college for my EPQ	Neutral
22	62	English	Male	My experience of giving class presentations or	Neutral

				speaking to an audience is poor as during my time in high school and sixth form, I have not had to take part in many presentations. I have taken part in very few and were always completed as part of a group. The subject of the presentation was often related to the subject. I don't like to present in front of people and prefer not to.	
16	57	English	Male	I have some experience of giving class presentations and speaking to an audience. I have done this when I was studying at college.	Neutral
21	61	English	Male	My experience of giving class presentations is that they can be initially difficult. But with practice and preparation I will be able to improve my presentation skills. I have conducted presentations in secondary school.	Neutral
20	65	English	Male	Throughout school and college I often participated in speaking in front of classes of other students as well as group projects in which I spoke with fellow students. At one time, I presented a PowerPoint presentation in front of my GCSE English class as part of my English Language GCSE. On other occasions, I produced presentations to my Sociology and History classes either as a group or on my own.	Neutral
20	65	English	Male	i have had previous experience whilst in college. I had to present a presentation in my IT class, there were 4 of us and we all had our bits to do, so i wasn't nervous.	Neutral
15	54	English	Male	I have done presentations in college as I studied Btec and in one of the assignments I had to	Neutral

				present my work to the whole class.	
16	39	English	Male	I often led presentations in front of my classmates, both in business and IT during my two years at sixth form. In the first year of sixth form our business class was invited to attend an ICAEW event requiring us to prepare and present a presentation advising a company of how to handle the next year. My team came third and I took a leadership role in my team, and I was the main person in my team who presented the advice. We achieved third place.	Neutral
12	48	English	Male	experience delivering group presentations in my previous studies	Neutral
17	55	English	Female	My experience in giving class presentations are that they usually involve a small group of people and everyone in the group being involved, giving their own speech and explaining the presentation by putting their point across.	Neutral
23	82	Not English	Female	In NCUK. 10 minutes presentation.	Neutral
24	82	English	Male	no experience	No experience
21	74	Not English	Male	No experience	No experience
18	65	Not English	Male	NO experience	No experience
21	70	Not English	Male	no experience	No experience
22	69	English	Female	No Experience	No experience
26	91	English	Female	No experience	No experience
18	63	English	Male	no experience	No experience
17	77	English	Male	No experience	No experience
14	58	English	Male	No experience.	No experience
19	70	Not English	Female	no experience	No experience
17	61	Not English	Female	No experience.	No experience

24	81	English	Male	No experience	No experience
28	98	Not English	Female	No experience.	No experience
23	73	Not English	Female	No experience	No experience
14	53	Not English	Male	No experience	No experience
13	53	English	Male	In my previous job, I worked my way up to a team leader. My job was to train fellow employees in the sales and marketing field. I would often deliver training sessions to new employees of the company. At first I was quire nervous but after delivering a few training sessions, my confidence grew. Also, at college, I had to work as part of a group and deliver a presentation to the rest of the class as part of my course.	Overcome
19	66	English	Female	I have done few presentations before where I had to stand up at the front and present it to the audience. At start I was a little nervous, however, as I have had previous experience I feel I am much more confident than before.	Overcome
19	73	English	Male	I had to give a presentation on a topic of my choice, it involved me standing in front of a class for fifteen minutes. my presentation was about social media, and at the start I felt nervous, however a few minutes in, I felt good and the feeling completely went.	Overcome
19	67	English	Female	I was a course representative last year for the first year pharmacy students. For the first few meetings I was nervous but I became more comfortable in the formal setting and became better at participating in discussions. From	Overcome

				presentations at sixth form and university last year I was able to overcome the nerves I would get from presenting in front of a group of people and now I find preparing and completing presentations an enjoyable experience. I enjoy the group meeting processes and find it interesting hearing other people's ideas.	
9	38	Not English	Male	When i was studying with the international study centre in the university. In each module I have did a presentation, in the first presentation I was nervous it was very difficult for me to forces because English is not my first language. After that could the presentations easily because of mu tutors helped and because of the facilities that the university provide, such as presentations rooms and the and the data shows really that helped me to improve my presentation skills.	Overcome
19	57	English	Male	While carrying out a presentation, I sometimes become nervous but it gets easier as the presentation goes on.	Overcome
17	81	English	Male	I did a lot of presentations in front of my class mates at school, i was always nervous at the introduction stage but i grew in confidence as the presentations went on. I have never done presentations in front of strangers.	Overcome
20	61	English	Male	in class during sixth form business, i have been part of a group which has presented a presentation in front of our small group of around 14 people, i felt reasonably nervous before, but as i got into	Overcome

				presenting the nerves went away.	
18	57	English	Male	I have given class presentations before but have not done it often, only sometimes. I used to feel nervous at first whilst starting off but grew in confidence as the presentation went on.	Overcome
24	78	English	Male	I had to do group presentations quite often in college. I was always nervous. I was a waiter up until university, so I had to talk to strangers of different sized groups and ages which has given me a lot more confidence when doing presentations. Past job was a waiter. I had to speak to strangers on a regular basis in various sized groups, varying from 1 person to about 20. I felt confident in those situations.	Overcome
21	65	English	Male	In A-level history, we had to give 1 presentation each per topic we were studying. We had to research then teach the subject as an introductory lesson. It was a small class which made me nervous because all eyes were looking at me and they gave a verbal peer review at the end. Sometimes when I knew the presentation wasn't up to scratch id panic and deliver the presentation terribly. In A-levels at sixth form, the history class was very small, so the teachers for both units would introduce a topic and we'd go do independent research and teach the class in 3/4 weeks' time. This helped because we'd peer assess each other's and give feedback, also we learned how and how not to present something. This	Overcome

				experience helped me a lot in confidence and what frame of mind to be in when presenting to a class.	
27	95	English	Female	I have done presentations in a class at college. I felt nervous at the start of the year however by the end of the year I was comfortable at presenting to the class.	Overcome
20	64	English	Female	in College I had different assignments where we would have to create presentations on PowerPoint and present them to the class to be able to pass a certain criteria of our course. The presentation was about 15 minutes long, I was nervous at first as everyone was looking at me but as I got into the presentation I was forgot about everyone else and was concentrating on presenting my work.	Overcome
17	67	English	Male	I have given a presentations throughout my college years to audiences, at first I was very nervous and didn't want to do It, however after a couple of times of doing a presentation in front of an audience I felt more relaxed and had a confidence boost after talking to my tutor about it which really motivated me.	Overcome
18	54	Not English	Female	during my time at college, my sociology teacher was very keen on class presentations as a way of learning. Initially I was nervous since it was a new environment but as time went on I started to feel comfortable enough to stand in front of my class mates.	Overcome
24	84	Not English	Female	At my college, I did extended project which involved researching independently by writing	Overcome

				an assignment and then giving a presentation on what I have found. So during this period I felt very nervous so I did a preparation beforehand. In the end everything went well as I knew what I was talking about so my confidence was gradually building up and I felt really relaxed at the end	
18	57	English	Male	I have only spoken in front of audiences when giving a class presentation in front of my fellow students. These were usually group projects where we prepared a presentation and gave it in front of a class of 20 students. I have also given presentations by myself and have found these to be scary at first, but when it came to it, I actually found that I rather enjoyed myself as they gave me a chance to express myself	Overcome
20	80	English	Male	In college there was a module based on presenting a PowerPoint in front of the whole class. I had research the subject area and the topic I was going to present in class very well, which made me feel more comfortable when presenting in class. There have been some instances where I have felt completely nervous when presenting but I think form past experience I can overcome that fear.	Overcome
19	59	English	Male	I have given a presentation within a group to directors from Thornton as part of my business studies A-level. At first i felt nervous and kept referring back to my notes but as the presentation went on i grew in confidence and could deliver the	Overcome

				presentation without having to look at my notes or at the power point.	
14	53	English	Male	Had to do a numerous amount of presentations during double business course in 6th form. Felt nervous when having to do my first presentation back in year 12 however when it came to delivering my last presentation towards the end of year 13, I was confident at being able to deliver a good quality presentation in front of my class.	Overcome
21	66	Not English	Female	At first i am quite nervous about flowing with presentations or speaking to an audience. It takes me some few seconds to relax feel more comfortable and gain confidence with my speaking.	Overcome
20	71	English	Male	At school I had to present an Assembly in front of the whole year group about bullying. I was very nervous before playing my role as there was a large group of audience. However, the fact that I was not presenting alone gave me some comfort that helped me present my role successfully.	Overcome
18	64	English	Male	Nervous at first but settled down and got on with it, usually in GCSE English using PowerPoints	Overcome
18	63	English	Male	Nervous at first but built up confidence throughout the presentation	Overcome
24	71	Not English	Female	I used to get involved in many presentations at school but once i got very nervous and i couldn't speak good but afterwards i tried to get over that fear and participate in public speaking competition and EYP i got improved but i still don’t feel comfortable with the idea	Overcome

16	55	Not English	Male	I do have some experience of giving presentations. Couple of months ago, I attended summer school at Bradford University where we were asked to prepare a group presentation and present in front of a large audience. Initially, I felt nervous and lack of confidence but after the presentation I felt more confident and was ready to prepare any presentation and perform to an audience.	Overcome
24	66	Not English	Female	I have given a class presentation very few times. I felt nervous but after a while of speaking I felt better and more confident.	Overcome
16	55	English	Male	I have given short presentations in front of my class mates and other classes in the past at college. I feel rather confident whilst giving presentations. I must admit I do feel nervous before and at the start of the presentations but after a while and when I get into my rhythm, I feel rather relaxed and at ease.	Overcome
15	53	Not English	Male	I have done many presentation while i was in school and I've also had the chance to speak in front of students and sometimes facing strangers. I used to get very nervous about it but it has grown on me and i feel much more confident and relaxed now	Overcome
18	61	English	Male	I have previously have done a PowerPoint presentation for my GCSE English lesson, in which I did it based on my Birth place country Kurdistan. that entailed fact and figures about my country and the struggle they faced during the Saddam	Positive

				regime and what its feel like to be Kurdish and also to be able to express your freedom under our own Kurdish autonomous region. after the presentation I felled very excited due to the fact I help to educate at least one more individual about what suffering my country faced in the past and the excitement to also express myself freely without anyone judging me.	
19	74	Not English	Male	I have experience to make presentations because I'm not afraid when I speak in front of people and I'm very happy when I work with group .	Positive
17	60	English	Male	In class, I created a presentation which I had to present in front of an audience. I had to present to a class which held around 20 students. I had to express my thoughts and opinions on human rights. I felt fairly confident presenting in front of an audience and I wasn't nervous building up to the presentation.	Positive
13	44	English	Male	There have been many occasions in school and in college where I had to present my ideas to the class. This involved speaking to the whole class in front of them all and in my experience I felt comfortable talking to the whole class at once.	Positive
19	66	Not English	Female	During A levels we often had to do present PowerPoints to the class which involved taking over parts of the lessons and explaining certain topics. I usually felt relaxed and comfortable	Positive
13	52	English	Male	I feel confident in delivering presentations to an audience when it is well prepared beforehand. I have had some experience	Positive

				in this, with my most recent one being this summer just gone where I had to deliver a speech in front of 300 students graduating from career academy (a course we did whilst in sixth form). I felt nervous when coming on stage as I didn't know how to start however as I started to speak I began to feel more confident and delivered a good speech as it was prepared beforehand.	
11	44	English	Male	I represented my accounting class at college which involved a couple meetings a year where I would put forward any of my classes problems or issues with staff or the course itself, I had no problem doing this it would often be done in a group of five, one being the head of department and four others students in similar departments	Positive
14	53	English	Male	group presentations in law classes at college. i felt confident because it was in front of a small class and i knew everyone. i was also confident because i usually knew what i was talking about.	Positive
12	49	English	Male	The experience I have is in giving class presentations. This is because at my college I did a lot of group work which involved presentations, this made it easier for me as I was getting confident and comfortable whilst delivering a PowerPoint presentation.	Positive
16	59	English	Female	As the head girl for three years during high school, I have become accustomed and confident when speaking in formal situations and in meetings. Similarly, as a performer I am able to work in groups	Positive

				and state my ideas when building a performance. the whole performance process has significantly built up my confidence skills.	
18	61	English	Male	I have spoken to peers in college, however, I have never spoken to a large crowd. I don't mind speaking to people if it is in a subject area I am confident in.	Positive
18	58	English	Male	I would say i have a good experience in giving a class presentation to an audience because i have done a few presentations on my own such as creating my own business and purpose of accounting and presented them to the whole class in college.	Positive
11	49	English	Male	I felt very confident because I revised what I was saying and made sure it was right so I was happy and confident.	Positive
15	61	English	Female	I usually feel a little nervous but if I know we've prepared well then I am able to adopt a confident persona anyway, regardless of whether I feel inwardly nervous. In the past as part of the schooling process i was asked to deliver presentations in front of fellow students on numerous occasions, where we were assessed on our ability to communicate information. Outside of this I have been asked to represent the schools i have attended as an independent party, to deliver my feedback on how i found the schools I was attending. I have delivered speeches to approximately a crowd of 300 adults, when i was at high school. I have no fear of speaking to people in a formal environment.	Positive

16	58	English	Female	Public speaking and general presentations has always been a huge passion of mine. At high school I did numerous presentations and large assemblies to motivate the younger students. I love to prepare these presentations and speeches because I thrive off the nerves and the satisfaction of motivating the contemporary youth. Another reason I love doing this is because I like to impress people I like the idea of being extremely professional and articulate.	Positive
16	54	English	Male	Firstly I have presented presentations in front of a small class and I felt confident in doing it as I knew what I was talking about. When it comes to presentations I am happy to present them as long as I know that I am going towards the correct path and also doing it correctly. I do feel confident in doing presentations as I have done quite few during my 6form study.	Positive
17	64	English	Male	I have done presentation before in my college and I was confident in doing it. I had to do this as I did btec in college and in one of my assignments in college I had to show my presentation to the class.	Positive
25	63	English	Male	I have given brief group training sessions sometimes to groups of 20 plus, but these were on subjects that I worked with every day, I was very confident with and required very little preparation. I have taken part in many meetings and am more than happy to answer questions and give input where needed, again these were on very	Positive

				familiar subjects that I worked with every day. I have been employed as a manager for a number of years, so one of my biggest concerns is working on group projects with my peers rather than subordinates.	
14	49	Not English	Male	In the final year of college i had to start up a company for a year. Our company had 30 shareholders (people i didn't knew) and we had to do shareholder meetings. i felt very confident speaking in front of people because i knew what i was talking about.	Positive
15	45	English	Male	I have given a presentation about Manga to an audience and I found it easy since I had done research about the subject and I already knew a lot about it. In that presentation I didn't have a subject lust which I should talk about at each section of the presentation.	Positive

Appendix 10

Full Results of Tukey's HSD Test

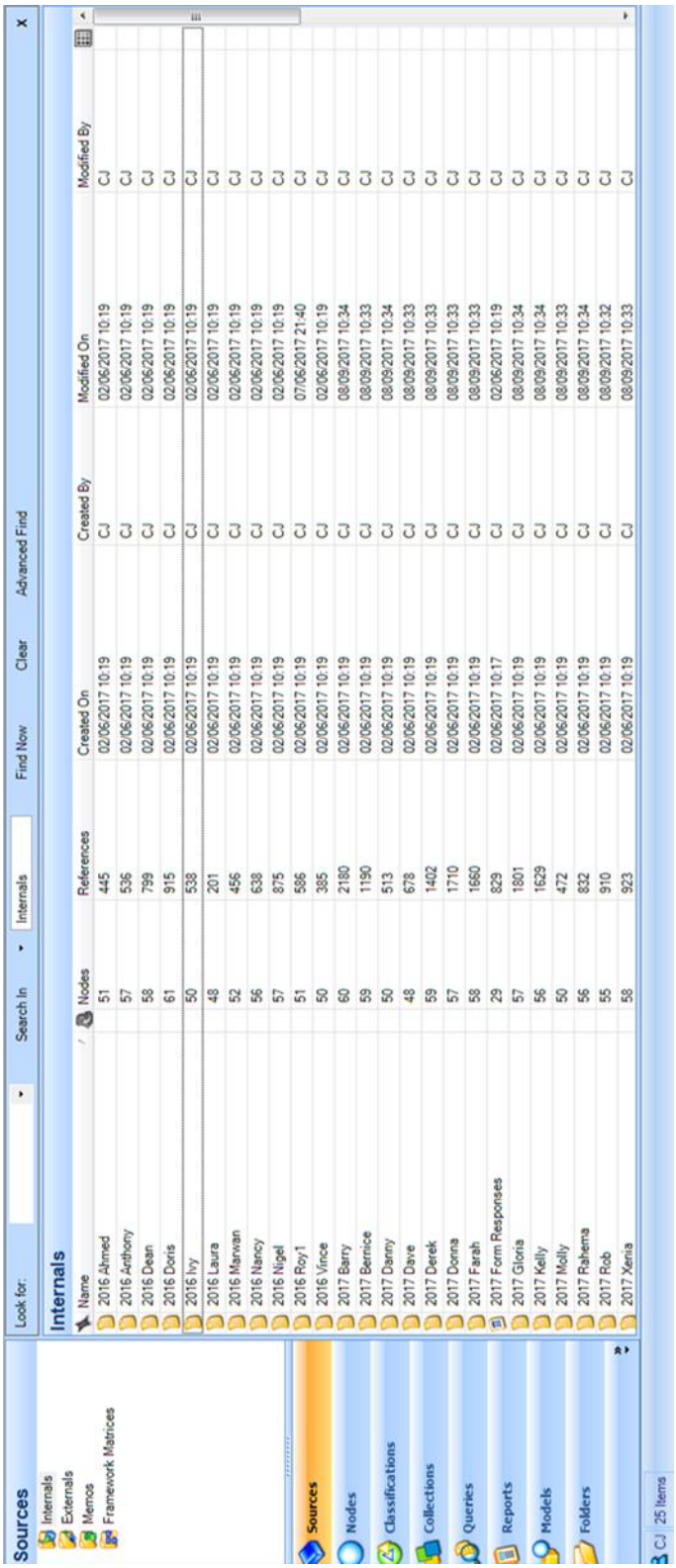
Results of Multiple Comparisons of Categories using Tukey's HSD Test comparing the coded response to 'Please write about your experience of giving class presentations or speaking to an audience in other situations' and the Public Speaking subset of the PRCA-24.

Multiple Comparisons of Categories						
Dependent Variable: Public Speaking element of the PRCA-24						
Tukey's HSD Test						
(I) Category Code	(J) Category Code	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	Significance	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Negative	No experience	2.63	1.12	0.14	-0.47	5.73
	Neutral	5.15*	0.96	0.00	2.50	7.81
	Overcome	4.16*	0.91	0.00	1.65	6.68
	Positive	7.18*	1.02	0.00	4.37	9.99
No experience	Negative	-2.63	1.12	0.14	-5.73	0.47
	Neutral	2.53	1.20	0.23	-0.81	5.86
	Overcome	1.54	1.16	0.68	-1.68	4.76
	Positive	4.55*	1.25	0.00	1.09	8.01
Neutral	Negative	-5.15*	0.96	0.00	-7.81	-2.50
	No experience	-2.53	1.20	0.23	-5.86	0.81
	Overcome	-0.99	1.01	0.87	-3.78	1.81
	Positive	2.03	1.11	0.36	-1.04	5.09
Overcome	Negative	-4.16*	0.91	0.00	-6.68	-1.65
	No experience	-1.54	1.16	0.68	-4.76	1.68
	Neutral	0.99	1.01	0.87	-1.81	3.78
	Positive	3.01*	1.06	0.04	0.07	5.96
Positive	Negative	-7.18*	1.02	0.00	-9.99	-4.37
	No experience	-4.55*	1.25	0.00	-8.01	-1.09
	Neutral	-2.03	1.11	0.36	-5.09	1.04
	Overcome	-3.01*	1.06	0.04	-5.96	-0.07
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level; Tukey HSD a, b						
Category Code	Count	Subset for alpha = 0.05				
		1	2	3		
Positive	20	15.85				
Neutral	24	17.88	17.88			
Overcome	29		18.86			
No experience	15		20.40	20.40		
Negative	37			23.03		
Significance		0.34	0.14	0.12		
Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.						
a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 22.743.						

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Appendix 11

NVivo Screenshot 1



Appendix 12

NVivo Screenshot 2

Queries

Queries
Results

Queries

Nodes by presentation (13)

	A : Final Presentation	B : First Presentation	C : Second Presentation
1 : Audience	13	16	16
2 : Better Task Understanding	20	4	4
3 : Emotional & Physiological Arousal	5	4	2
4 : Group Negative	22	38	8
5 : Group Positive	45	62	48
6 : High Stakes	5	0	0
7 : Illusion of Transparency	0	1	1
8 : Leadership	12	16	4
9 : Literature	10	15	9
10 : Memory	2	0	0
11 : Negative	13	33	8
12 : Novelty & Experience	8	2	5
13 : Peer	5	8	4
14 : Peer Feddback	13	29	12
15 : Peer Observation	3	9	4
16 : Positive	31	25	15
17 : Preparation Negative	14	29	4
18 : Preparation Positive	53	42	43
19 : Reflections	3	0	1
20 : The Process of 3 Presentations	25	0	5
21 : Tolerence of Stress	35	15	6
22 : Topic	19	5	12
23 : Tutor Discussion	13	13	8
24 : What makes a good presentation	9	2	4

Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections
Queries
Reports
Models
Folders

Appendix 13

Themes Mentioned by Students in the Qualitative Data

Theme and sources where previously identified	Remark
Group Positive	Positive comments made in a group context.
Preparation Positive Finn (2007), Morreale (2010) and Byrne et al. (2012)	Positive comments made about preparing for presentations. Almost all of these comments were made in a group context so this theme is discussed as a sub-theme of groups.
Preparation Negative	Negative comments made about preparing for presentations. Almost all of these comments were made in a group context so this theme is discussed as a sub-theme of groups.
Practice Ayres et al. (1998), Finn (2007), Allen et al. (2008) and Smythe and Nikolai (2002)	Comments which mention practicing presentations. Almost all of these comments were made in a group context so this theme is discussed as a sub-theme of groups.
Group Negative	Negative comments made in a group context.
Feedback Hassall et al. (2013b) and van Ginkel, Gulikers, Biemans and Mulder (2017)	Comments made about the written feedback given by both tutors and peers immediately after the delivery of each presentation.
Audience Pribyl et al.'s (2001) and Finn (2007)	Comments made about the presence of the audience during the delivery of each presentation.
Tolerance of Stress Iba (2007)	Comments made about tolerance of stress in relation to presentations.
Topic knowledge Finn (2007)	Comments made about the importance of topic knowledge when presenting.
Literature DeWitt et al. (2007)	Comments which mention use of literature to inform reflections or comments about presentations.
Tutor Advice	Comments made about advice from and discussions with the module tutors about presenting.
The Process of 3 Presentations Arquero et al. (2016)	Comments made about the progressive nature of the presentation schedule in the module.
Peer Observation Adams (2004), Hamer et al. (2008) and van Ginkel et al. (2015)	Comments made about watching other groups of students deliver their presentations.
Features of a good presentation	Comments made concerning what makes a good presentation.
High Stakes Arquero et al. (2016)	Comments made about apprehension being generated due to the high stakes nature of a presentation.
Reflections	Comments made about the usefulness of writing reflections on delivering presentations.
Novelty Pribyl et al. (2001)	Comments by inexperienced presenters who were not as apprehensive as anticipated.
Illusion of Transparency Savitsky and Gilovich (2003)	Comments about the feeling that the audience notices a presenter's nerves.
Peer Review	Comments about reviewing other student reflections about presenting.

Appendix 14

Dissemination of the Study

Presentations entitled 'Student Oral Presentations: Developing the Skills and Reducing Oral Communication Apprehension' were delivered as follows:

April 2015 The School of Education and Professional Development Conference at the University of Huddersfield

January 2016 The Business School Conference at the University of Huddersfield

March 2016 International Technology, Education and Development Conference Valencia, Spain.

Paper published in the proceedings of the March 2016 IATED Conference:

Ireland, Chris (2016) Student oral presentations: developing the skills and reducing the apprehension. In: *Proceedings of 10th International Technology, Education and Development Conference Valencia, Spain*. 7-9 March, 2016. IATED, Valencia, Spain, pp. 1474-1483. doi:10.21125/inted.2016.1317

This paper has been cited by Tran (2016), Roberts (2017) and Abu Taha and Abu Rezeq (2018).

Dissemination at the School of Education and Professional Development Conference, University of Huddersfield May 2018

'Reducing Public Speaking Anxiety in Undergraduate Accountancy Students: An Intervention in a 'New' University' [Presentation].

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