

“I guess I am not that harsh on myself anymore”
- Foreign Language Anxiety Among
Young Finnish Professionals

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Communication apprehension as a phenomenon has been widely studied, but the earlier research has not explored professionalism as an affecting factor in communication apprehension levels. This study attempts to answer the question “What is the relationship between communication apprehension and the length of full-time employment after the completion of the final degree?”. In addition to the factor of length of full-time employment, the relationship between the levels of communication apprehension (CA) and other factors including amount of English used at work, the subjects’ educational background and biological sex are explored. The target group consisted of 56 young professionals of which 31 were university graduates and 25 university of applied sciences graduates. All subjects were English as a Foreign Language learners with a period of full-time employment varying from 0 to 10 years after completing their final degree. The data was collected through an online questionnaire and further explored with interviews. The methods for the analysis were quantitative and qualitative. The theoretical background introduces earlier research on the topic and creates a basis for the discussion.

The quantitative analysis resulted in statistically insignificant relationships between the levels of CA and the factors studied. The analysis did imply that the subjects with a longer period of full-time employment and higher frequency of oral communication in English at work reported lower levels of CA. The educational background factor showed close to non-existent differences in levels of CA and the male target group reported higher levels of CA than the female target group. The qualitative analysis supported the findings of the quantitative analysis.

The results suggest that a relationship between length of full-time employment, frequency of English used in oral communication and levels of CA exists, but due to the size of the target group no generalizations can be made.

key words: Communication apprehension, Second language acquisition, Foreign language anxiety, Professionalism, English as a foreign language

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List of Abbreviations

CA	Communication Apprehension
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FLA	Foreign Language Anxiety
SLL	Second Language Learning
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
PSA	Public Speaking Anxiety
PRCA	Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

1 Introduction

Fluent English skills are considered as an obligatory requirement in modern day labour market. In addition to fluent language skills, recruiters seek people with good communication skills. The basis of language knowledge for Finns is built in comprehensive school, when children, with the help of their parents, decide which languages they will study. The consequences of these choices will be apparent much later, lasting until upper secondary school, university studies and employment after graduation (Airola 2011). This study explores one aspect which affects young Finnish professionals' communication in English: *communication apprehension* and *foreign language anxiety*.

Both communication apprehension (CA), and foreign language anxiety (FLA) are phenomena which have been widely discussed in connection to second language learning (SLL or L2 learning). Although CA is a term also used in first language (L1) communication, this study treats the concept as a feature of communication in English (L2). CA as a concept is defined as anxiety related to oral communication, and as a measurement unit it is described as the level of fear or anxiety towards an upcoming or anticipated communication situation with a person or persons (McCroskey 1970). FLA is a term which consists of three parts: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986). As the current study focuses on language anxiety experienced outside the classroom environment, the focus is on CA in L2 but FLA is included in the discussion as an overlapping concept. In addition to CA and FLA, this study will introduce the concepts of English as a foreign language (EFL) and public speaking anxiety (PSA). EFL is quite self-explanatory since it describes the status of English as L2. PSA is a concept which describes certain type of fear or shyness to communicate with people, usually in connection to public speaking situations such as giving speeches or presentations (Elmenfi 2016, 179).

The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship of professionalism and CA. The relationship was examined through four points of view. The main focus was on the relationship between years of full-time employment and levels of CA experienced by young professionals. The second most important relationship studied was the one between the frequency at which English is used at work and levels of CA. Thirdly, the relationship between the educational background and levels of CA was

scrutinized. As the study was conducted in Finland, the subjects had completed their degree in one of the two higher education institutions, university or university of applied sciences. The last relationship studied was the relationship between gender and CA. The target group consisted of 56 subjects, all employed full-time after completing their degree. The job titles of the subjects included positions as for example, Legal Counsel, International Affairs Manager, Senior Tax Manager, Research Coordinator Customer Success Manager and HR Coordinator.

The empirical part of the study consists of quantitative and qualitative analyses. The method for the quantitative data collection was an online questionnaire which consisted of six questions regarding the subjects' background and of 24 statements based on the Personal Report of Communication (PRCA-24) test which was used to define the subjects' levels of CA. The analysis was conducted by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program, and the relationships were tested by conducting different tests to determine any statistical significances. The subjects for the qualitative part were chosen based on the questionnaire. 19 of the 56 subjects had admitted their contact details as a consent to be contacted with follow-up interview questions. All 19 subjects were contacted with seven follow-up questions and the final count of answers was of 12 subjects. These 12 answers were used as data for the qualitative analysis.

The structure of the study follows the department guidelines. Section two, Theoretical Background, introduces relevant earlier research and theories in five sub-sections. Firstly, research on communication apprehension is introduced by discussing the research of McCroskey, conceptualization of CA and the relationship between gender and CA. Secondly, the research on FLA is presented by discussing the research by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, and followed with introduction on research on the relationship between FLA and EFL, FLA and Gender and FLA and Age. Thirdly, research on PSA is introduced and fourthly, the earlier MA theses by Ljungqvist and Broholm are presented. Lastly, a quick introduction to my earlier research, a BA thesis on CA experienced by students, is given as it inspired conducting the current study. The third section of the paper presents the materials and research methods of the study along with an introduction of the research questions and expectations for the outcome. The fourth section includes the presentation of the results and general discussion. First the results of the background questions are presented, followed by the quantitative

results. The introduction of the results is concluded with the qualitative results. The last sub-section of the results section discusses the results in connection to the research presented in the theoretical background section along with a presentation of possible limitations and problems of the study. Lastly, the conclusion section summarizes the study and offers suggestions for further research.

2 Theoretical Background

This section of the thesis introduces earlier studies and research conducted on communication apprehension (CA) and foreign language anxiety (FLA). Firstly, James McCroskey's work will be discussed. He has been a major contributor in the field of language anxiety studies, and the current study leans mostly on terminology once introduced by him, along with the questionnaire used to collect the data which is based on his creation: The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, abbreviated PRCA-24 tool. Along with McCroskey's work, the conceptualization of CA is presented and research on the relationship between gender and CA is introduced in the first section. Secondly, FLA as a concept and the research by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope will be discussed as they have made a great impact on the field of FLA studies. In addition to the research mentioned, studies on FLA experienced by English as a foreign language (EFL) learners will be presented along with a discussion on the relationship between gender and FLA. Thirdly, public speaking anxiety (PSA) as a concept is discussed and earlier research on the topic introduced. Fourthly, a quick look at MA theses by Maiju Ljungqvist (2003) and Maria Broholm (2006) will be made, both of their topics being about FLA and published at the University of Turku. Lastly, a quick overview of my own BA thesis is given it being the work which sparked the idea for the current study.

2.1 Communication Apprehension by James McCroskey

McCroskey introduces the term communication apprehension (abbreviated CA) in "Measures of Communication-bound anxiety" (1970). The background for creating the term was criticism against the term *stage fright* earlier broadly used by, for example Gilkinson and Paul (Gilkinson 1942) to define the anxiety one experiences when expected to use a foreign language in spoken situations. According to McCroskey, stage fright as a term suffers from not taking multidimensionality into account when discussing the uneasiness as it only concentrates on public speaking situations and does not consider other sorts of spoken contexts. He continues exploring the concept further by introducing the term *reticent*, which was first used by Phillips (1968) to describe a person who is not just afraid of speaking in public but also experiences problems with communicating in small groups and in interpersonal transactions. To

define communication apprehension as precisely as possible, McCroskey discusses CA as "broadly based anxiety related to oral communication rather than a variety of 'types' of communication-bound anxiety" and moves on declaring that multidimensionality is to be regarded as a major concern when creating new measuring instruments (1970, 270). The research done by McCroskey is inspiring and opens the door for further understanding communication as a phenomenon.

2.1.1 Conceptualization of CA

There are multiple conceptualizations of CA. They are roughly divided into two main concepts: trait-like and state-like CA. This means that CA can be perceived as a personality trait and a predisposition towards communication or as a state-like response to a given communication situation (McCroskey and Beatty 1986, 280). According to McCroskey and Beatty (1986), research on CA has developed from the trait perspective towards the state perspective, but due to the nature of the construct, neither of them can be strictly ruled out. On the contrary, there are four points of view that are scattered between trait-like and state-like CA: trait-like, generalized context, person-group, and situational CA. Trait-like and generalized-context CA are introduced as personality bound, relatively enduring orientations towards communication and only differ in context. Trait-like CA is broadly experienced when communicating despite the context, where generalized-context CA is experienced only in a specific given communication context. Person-group CA is experienced when communicating with a given person or group. Although it is also regarded as relatively enduring, it is not perceived as personality based but more precisely a reaction to expectations and limitations generated by another person or a group of people. Situational CA is not seen as an enduring state but more as a temporary reaction generated by a certain communication situation and its participants. It has been stated that people with high levels of person-group CA can be predicted to have high levels of situational CA, but such conclusions cannot be drawn with people experiencing high levels of trait-like or generalized-context CA. The *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* (PRCA) tool was designed by McCroskey to measure trait-like CA. It has been assumed that the widely used version of PRCA, the 24-statement PRCA-24, results in scores which are highly consistent across an extended period of time (McCroskey and Beatty 1986, 279–283).

Before the PRCA's first version was created, there were a few instruments used to measure communication-bound anxiety. What they all had in common was that three types of approaches were used: observer ratings, devices for indexing physiological changes and self-report scales (McCroskey 1970, 270–271). From these priorly used scales, by process of elimination, McCroskey went on to creating the PRCA. He criticised two of the instruments mentioned above for multiple reasons. The biggest problem with observer ratings was general unreliability and more precisely the fact that they only counted for observed behaviour and did not take into consideration the most anxious people who refused to participate in speaking situations altogether. Indexing physiological changes was ruled out due to cost efficiency: the aim was to study as many people as possible with as low costs as possible. The technology used to study physiological changes was not available on all college campuses at the time and the studies were relatively expensive to conduct. Thus, McCroskey decided that taking all of the above into consideration, the best way to approach studying communication-bound anxiety was to conduct a Likert-scale self-report questionnaire. According to him, the self-report scales have three major advantages. Firstly, they are easy and inexpensive to administer. Secondly, a variety of communication contexts can be studied at once and thirdly, especially when developed into a finalised Likert-type scale, self-reports can be assumed to be highly reliable (McCroskey 1970, 271–272). The PRCA-24 tool was used in the questionnaire of the current study and will be introduced in more depth in section 3.1.2.

Pribyl et al. (1998) tested the PRCA-24 tool in a cross-cultural context. The niche for their research was the fact that PRCA-24 was widely used in CA research in the United States but had only been used in three cases in Japan thus far (1998, 47). Their 283 subjects, all students at a private university in Tokio, filled in the PRCA-24 questionnaire and the results were compared with an American sample. The levels of CA of the Japanese sample were higher than the American sample. The mean for the Japanese students was 76.7 with a standard deviation of 15.54 when the mean for the American sample was 65.6 with a standard deviation of 15.30 (Pribyl et al., 48). The most striking results were the similarity of the highest scores in the public speaking area in both samples, but also the case of gender difference in the same area. Where the difference between the sexes was inconclusive in the American sample, striking

differences emerged in the Japanese sample. Pribyl et al. suggest this is because in Japan the public speaking role is usually culturally performed by males (Pribyl et al., 50–51). In addition to the cultural difference in the public speaking area, one other cultural feature was introduced. The Japanese respondents had some difficulties in telling the difference between group and meeting situations when filling in the report. It was suggested that it was due to the context differences between Japanese and American cultures (Pribyl et al., 51).

As seen further in the sections of this thesis, the term communication apprehension, its conceptualisations and the PRCA-24 tool all played a significant role in the current study and as the creator of all the three concepts above, McCroskey's work is considered as the most important theoretical framework. CA is a phenomenon which cannot hide from the effect of other factors such as gender. Earlier research on the relationship between CA and gender will be introduced next in section 2.1.2.

2.1.2 CA and Gender

This section will introduce research conducted on gender differences in CA. The works of McCroskey, Simpson and Richmond (1982), Farizidad and Simin (2015), Frantz, Marlow and Wathen (2005) and Rafek et al. (2014) will be introduced in order to provide theoretical background to the gender discussion in the current study.

McCroskey, Simpson and Richmond (1982) studied the relationship of biological sex and CA, shyness and apprehension within a sample of 778 college students and 106 secondary school teachers (1982, 129). In the context of the current study, only the results of the CA part of the study will be introduced. Their results suggest that even though females reported higher levels of CA than males in both student and teacher groups, the difference was not statistically significant and thus no drastic conclusions about the difference could be made (1982, 131). Even if there was no statistical significance in the difference in the results, the suggested difference in the levels of CA supports the findings of the following research.

Farizidad and Simin (2015) studied a sample of 140 undergraduate students, 70 males and 70 females. All subjects were EFL learners and majored in either English literature, translation or teaching. Their results support the notion that females

experience higher levels of oral communication apprehension: Via two bivariate procedures they resulted in significant differences between the levels of CA between the sexes. In addition to concluding to a higher level of oral communication apprehension of the female sample, females were found to be less willing to contribute to class discussions (2015, 96).

Frantz, Marlow and Wathen's (2005) research began with the hypothesis that females experience higher levels of CA than males. They conducted their research on a sample of 185 undergraduate students, of whom 138 were females and 47 males. Their research supported the hypothesis and resulted in females experiencing higher levels of CA. They suggest that the higher levels may be due to females' proneness to compare themselves to other women along with the pressure to be perfect in the eyes of the society (2005, 6). They link this with communication apprehension as follows:

Television has molded the ideal woman to be aggressive, independent, assertive and outgoing. If a female feels as though she lacks these characteristics then it may lead to selfconsciousness, which may then lead to communication apprehension. This might explain why females showed a significantly higher level of CA than males.

(Frantz, Marlow and Wathen 2005, 6)

The research on personality differences between men and women by Weisberg, DeYoung and Hirsch (2011) support this suggestion. They declare that the communication differences between men and women are in fact generated by cultural norms and not based on personality traits as such. Where personality traits are difficult to alter, the cultural norms are submissive to change (Weisberg, DeYoung and Hirsch 2011).

Rafek et al. (2014) studied CA in the second language learning context. Their respondents were 55 students enrolled in English language classes at a Malaysian university, 30 of them females and 25 males. The findings of their study support the conclusions introduced above. Even though all their subjects reported high levels of CA, their female subjects reported to experience higher levels of CA than the male subjects (2014, 94).

As the research introduced above suggests and in the light of the results presented, it is safe to assume that females generally report higher levels of CA than

males. This discussion has included works which have studied CA in mother tongue context as well as in EFL context which strengthens the validity of the assumption. The gender differences as a factor will be further discussed in section 2.2.3 in the context provided by studies conducted on the relationship between gender and FLA.

2.2 Foreign language Anxiety

This section of the study will explore the concept of FLA. The research on the topic is relevant to the current study, since the term CA was studied in L2 context. Firstly, the research by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) will be introduced, since they can be regarded as the creators of the term FLA. Secondly, research on FLA experienced by EFL learners will be discussed. Thirdly, the relationship between gender and FLA will be explored and lastly, research on the relationship between age and FLA will be presented.

2.2.1 FLA according to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) emphasized the connection between anxiety and three occurring parallels: *communication apprehension*, *test anxiety* and *fear of negative evaluation* (1986, 127). Communication apprehension is explained as shyness in interpersonal communication situations fuelled by the anxiety experienced, such as speaking in a foreign language in small groups, in public, or when listening and receiving spoken messages in a foreign language. They also state that once one generally has problems in speaking in public even in one's mother tongue, one will probably also struggle in public speaking situations in a foreign language (1986, 127). When a foreign language is studied, tests and quizzes are more frequent than in other subjects. For example, vocabulary is tested in FL classes very often as it is still generally regarded as the basis of learning a new language. The frequency of testing is due to the stronger need of performance evaluation, which is an important part of keeping track of the students' language levels. Test-taking anxiety itself stems from the fear of failure, which is present in the students' life on an everyday basis due to the facts presented above. When oral testing enters the picture, test-taking anxiety is strongly connected to communication apprehension: oral tests are usually taken in groups with the teacher present or one-on-one with the teacher (1986, 128). The fear of negative evaluation is defined as "apprehension about others' evaluations,

avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (1986, 128). The fear of negative evaluation differs from test-taking anxiety since it is not only secluded in testing situations, but also in spoken or written situations where one might be afraid of the evaluation performed by the receiving end (1986,128). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope are the creators of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) measurement scale which is widely used to measure FLA in a classroom context. The FLCAS will be further discussed in the Materials and Methods in section 3.

Although Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope present all the features of FLA discussed above, one must keep in mind that FLA is not just a sum of these features. FLA is suggested to be a complex phenomenon driven also by one's beliefs, self-perception and feelings along with the expected behaviours in specific contexts when speaking in a foreign language is required (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986, 128). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's research will be revisited later in this study in section 2.3 where public speaking anxiety as a concept is explored further.

2.2.2 FLA and EFL Learners

This section introduces research on FLA experienced by English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. FLA experienced by English as foreign language learners has been widely studied. In this chapter the research by Trang, Moni, and Baldauf (2012), Humphries (2011), Hashemi (2011), Hismanoglu (2013), Atas (2015), Çağatay (2015), Karatas et al. (2016) and Liu and Huang (2011) will be discussed. The findings of these studies are linked to the current study since all the subjects of the study are native Finns, and have learned English as a foreign language.

Trang, Moni, and Baldauf (2012) studied highly anxious Vietnamese students of EFL and the effects FLA has on their motivation and determination of learning English. Instead of using the PRCA-24 tool, they used Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (1986) to collect data, along with interviewing their subjects. They firstly aimed to find out specific factors that affect the subjects' determination to study English. Their study resulted in suggesting that their determination was driven the strongest by their awareness of the importance of English and volitional control (2012, 4). However, the main outcome of their study was the strong suggestion that people should be

constantly reminded about the importance of English, so it would carry their interest and determination to study English all the way from the first years in school up until university studies (2012, 11). In the light of the current study, these suggestions play a significant role in determining how the subjects experience the development of their levels of FLA after moving on from controlled environments of language learning and teaching to a work environment where the responsibility of upholding and developing one's language skills lays solely on one's own shoulders.

Where Trang, Moni, and Baldauf introduced new information on how high levels FLA affect students' motivation and determination to study English as a foreign language, Rebecca Humphries (2011) studied international students' ability to overcome FLA. Where most of the studies in the field of FLA concentrate on studying FLA as a phenomenon in classroom settings and the role of the teacher in helping students to overcome this anxiety, Humphries studied whether the subjects experienced anxiety outside the classroom environment and whether it is possible for them to lower their levels of anxiety outside the classroom and without the teacher's assistance. The main focus of the study was the subjects' ability to work on their anxiety in target language environments in their free time. Like Trang et al, Humphries used Horwitz's FLCAS tool as the basis of her questionnaire. Her subjects were Chinese in their early twenties who lived and worked in Australia, and all experienced high levels of communication anxiety in English (2011, 69). Humphries' study resembles the current study as she took in count the development of the levels of anxiety: her questionnaire included self-evaluative questions about how the subjects estimated their confidence in using English has developed since first arriving in Australia. The results of the study strongly suggest that creating friendships with native speakers of the target language is essential in lowering the levels of anxiety. However, Humphries reminds the reader that not all native speakers are friendly and welcoming, and trying to socialize with an individual like this might result in negative experience and therefore increase anxiety experienced by the non-native (2011, 72). Humphries' sample group was small, as it consisted of only 5 subjects, which some might see as a possible problem in the study. One must keep in mind this was a pilot study which still resulted in an interesting outcome.

Hashemi (2011) studied English language anxiety among EFL learners. The study had 60 respondents, all English translation or literature majors at Azad University

Hamedan Branch in Iran (2011, 1813). His study suggests that there are multiple factors which generate language anxiety. Firstly, the pressure to acquire native-like pronunciation was introduced as the source of FLA by the respondents. Secondly, the respondents seemed to blame the strict classroom environment for their FLA. These two sources were suggested to be intertwined since the strict classroom environment pressured the respondents into a native-like pronunciation (ibid). The prospect of giving a presentation or speech in front of the class was reported to be highly anxiety inducing and situations where the whole class was involved in a group discussion which involved the teacher were reported to be less anxiety inducing (ibid). In addition to the learning environmental source presented, cultural context was reported to be the second most language anxiety inducing factor. The respondents reported societal factors as social context, culture, social status, and a sense of foreignness as more important catalysts for FLA than linguistic factors (Hashemi 2011, 1814). It is also worthy to note that the Iranian respondents were reported to have very limited exposure to English outside the classroom due to cultural conventions. This limits the opportunities to use oral English which is troubling for EFL learners in developing their oral communication skills (Hashemi, 1814).

Liu and Huang (2011) offer a point of view into the relationship between FLA, motivation and performance. They studied 980 undergraduate students in three Chinese universities, none of whom were majoring in English nor studied in English (2010, 1). Their most interesting finding was that the respondents did not feel highly anxious when speaking English and their level of motivation to learn English was moderate. These findings are especially interesting since they only participated in the compulsory English classes and their studying language was Chinese. This means that the motivation to study English was generated by other factors that did not create pressure or higher levels of FLA (2010, 5). However, they propose that FLA “turned out to be the most powerful and negative predictor for the students’ performance in English” (2010, 6). They move on confirming that anxiety correlates negatively with performance on a significant level as well as motivation does (2010, 1).

Hismanoglu discusses the levels of FLA experienced by Turkish EFL teacher candidates in his 2012 study along with a comparative analysis on the relationship between the levels of FLA and grade, age or gender (2013, 930). The study was conducted on a sample of 132 respondents, 46 males and 86 females, all students at

a Turkish state university (2013, 931). The study suggests that the general levels of FLA were not high, the subjects of higher age experienced lower levels of FLA, the subjects studying in fourth grade experienced lower levels of FLA than subjects in lower grades, and female subjects had higher levels of FLA than male subjects (2013, 937). The following section will further discuss studies on the relationship between FLA and gender.

Çağatay (2015) and Karatas et al. (2016), like Hismanoglu, studied Turkish EFL learners' FLA levels. Both studies targeted university students in English preparatory training, and among other factors, studied the relationship between English proficiency level and FLA. The only exception was Çağatay's focus on specifically foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) when Karatas et al.'s study focused on FLA (Çağatay 2015, 648, Karatas et al. 2016, 396). Çağatay's target group was a sample of 147 EFL students, with ages ranging from 17 to 29. The subjects were found to experience moderate levels of FLSA, with no connection between the level of FLSA and English proficiency level (2015, 652–653). Karatas et al. studied a sample of 488 EFL students and their most interesting finding conflicted with Çağatay's finding: The level of language proficiency was found to be connected to the level of FLA. Subjects on a higher proficiency level experienced higher levels of FLA than subjects on lower proficiency levels (Karatas et al. 2016, 400).

As presented above, FLA experienced by EFL learners is a multifaceted concept with similarities across cultures. Hashemi emphasizes the role of the language teacher and the learning environment in creating FLA (Hashemi 2011, 1814). Atas (2015) introduces another point of view to the issue and a possible solution to lowering levels of FLA outside the language classroom. Her study suggests speaking anxiety can be reduced through drama techniques (2015, 961). Her sample group of 24 high school students took a 6-week drama course, filled in FLCAS questionnaires prior and post the course and kept a diary during the course. The course consisted of exercises such as language games, role play, mime, improvisation and drama scripts (Atas 2015, 964). The findings of the study were based on the questionnaires and diaries mentioned above, along with student and teacher interviews. Based on these reports, Atas concluded that applying the drama techniques significantly lowered the subjects' levels of language anxiety (Atas 2015, 966–967). It is important to note, though not taken into account in the findings, that the students were exposed to an intensive six-week period

of communicating in English, which must have affected the levels of language anxiety.

2.2.3 FLA and Gender

This section will introduce the works of Piechurska-Kuciel (2012), Razak, Yassin and Maasum (2016) and Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013). They all studied the relationship between gender and FLA which resulted in interesting findings.

Piechurska-Kuciel (2012) researched gender-dependent language anxiety and communication apprehension in a sample of 621 Polish upper secondary school students, 396 females and 225 males. The goal of the study was to strengthen the assumption that females experience higher levels of language anxiety than males (2012, 238). However, her research resulted in abolishing the assumption, since the respondents reported similar levels of language anxiety despite their gender (ibid.)

Razak, Yassin and Maasum (2016) studied the relationship between gender and FLA on a sample of 155 Yemeni EFL university students, of whom 87 were female and 68 males (2016, 76). They used the FLCAS as the basis of their questionnaire. Females reported having slightly higher levels of language anxiety than males, but the difference was not statistically significant (2016, 79). They suggested the absence of a statistically significant difference can origin from the fact, that all the subjects had studied English as a foreign language for years prior to the study. The slight difference in the means between the male and female subjects was suggested to be because “females are shy in nature and studied separately from males from the first grade to the twelfth grade” (2016, 80).

Öztürk and Gürbüz’s (2013) research focused on studying the impact of gender on foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) and motivation (2013, 654). They had 383 subjects of whom 225 were female and 158 male. All of the subjects were pre-intermediate students at a Turkish state university (2013, 654). The study itself focused on motivation in addition to FLSA but for the purpose of this study, only the results of the FLSA part will be presented. They found a statistically significant difference in the relationship between FLSA and gender (2013, 659). Males reported experiencing low levels of FLSA and females reported experiencing moderate levels (2013, 661).

As seen above, the research of Piechurska-Kuciel (2012), Razak, Yassin and Maasum (2016) and Öztürk and Gürbüz (2012) all resulted in interesting findings concerning the relationship between gender and FLA. Where Piechurska-Kuciel's results differed from the others, the main assumption still exists that females experience higher levels of FLA than males. This is an assumption supported by the research of McCroskey, Simpson and Richmond (1982), Farizidad and Simin (2015), Frantz, Marlow and Wathen (2005) and Rafek et al. (2013) in discussion of the relationship between CA and gender introduced earlier in section 2.1.2.

2.2.4 FLA and age

As presented above in section 2.2.2, Hismanoglu (2013) studied the relationship between age and FLA among other factors. His findings suggest that age correlates with the level of FLA: people with higher age tend to have lower levels of FLA (2012, 937). This is an observation supported by, for example, studies by Elmenfi (2016) and Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008). Elmenfi studied age as the sole factor on FLA with a sample of 108 English students at a Libyan university (2016, 181). The subjects were all English language students with an age distribution between 25 and 54 years. His results strongly suggest that younger subjects reported higher levels of language anxiety than the subjects of a higher age (2016, 181). Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) studied the relationships between various sociobiographical variables and CA and FLA, age being one of the variables. They had a subject group of 464 multilinguals whose FLA levels were studied in five different communication situations: speaking with friends, colleagues, strangers, on the phone, and in public (2008, 911). Their study proposes that older adults are less apprehensive towards communication and have lower levels of FLA than younger adults (2008, 935).

As seen in the paragraph above, age does exist as a factor to take into consideration when studying FLA as a phenomenon. The results of the three studies introduced above all support the idea that people with higher age suffer lower levels of FLA than younger people. The relationship between FLA and age will be addressed in connection to the current study when the results of the qualitative analysis are presented. The next section will discuss a component of FLA: public speaking anxiety.

2.3 Public Speaking Anxiety

As mentioned earlier, the term *communication apprehension* was created to offer a multidimensional substitute for Gilkinson and Paul's earlier term *stage fright* (1942), which was strongly connected to public speaking situations. Where communication apprehension is a term used to describe anxiety or apprehension in all communication situations, the term *speaking anxiety* is described as a certain type of shyness or fear to communicate with people (Elmenfi 2016, 179). Speaking anxiety is an important concept in regard to the topic of this study, therefore a closer look at the construct is necessary to take. The relationship between speaking anxiety and FLA is studied in this section by first introducing the term *glossophobia*, which is the official name for fear of speaking in public. Secondly, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) will be returned to in relation to speaking anxiety. Thirdly, the research of Lintunen and Skaffari (2014), Jangir and Govinda (2018) and Daly, Vangelisti and Lawrence (1989) are introduced to explore the concept of speaking anxiety to a greater length.

The term *glossophobia* is defined as a fear of public speaking and a subset of social phobia by Fritscher (2018). She states it is exceptionally common as experts have estimated that 75% of the population experiences a certain amount of anxiety regarding public speaking and moves on explaining the consequences of high levels of anxiety in professional contexts. She declares that the majority of careers involve public speaking and not being able to perform in these situations due to a high level of glossophobia may lead to consequences which affect one's career (Fritscher 2018). When discussing the levels of glossophobia, Cummins suggests glossophobia is rarely so disabling that it requires treatment (2018, 28). Based on the percentage offered by Fritscher above, it was expected that the respondents of the current study might have reported higher levels of public speaking CA compared to group, meeting or interpersonal CA.

As mentioned above in section 2.2.1, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope define FLA as a combination of three factors: communication apprehension, test-anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (1986). Fear on negative evaluation is linked to public speaking situations and is characterized by apprehension over others' evaluation of one's performance, more precisely the evaluation being negative, which may lead to overall avoidance of public speaking situations (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986, 128). In

academic settings, the evaluation is not only expected to be negative from the teacher but also from peer students, which is a unique feature of second language classes compared to other academic subjects. This idea is applicable only in classroom settings but the idea that second language communication always involves risk taking applies in situations outside the classroom and is an important feature of the second language learning process (ibid.) It is an interesting subject to reflect in connection with public speaking situations at work. In addition to the risk of not pitching your ideas well enough for them to be accepted, using your second language as the communicative language generates another level of risk-taking.

Lintunen and Skaffari researched the features which affect EFL learners' public speaking performance (2014, 45). Their data is based on learning journals of 83 advanced English students, who participated in a course which targeted oral communication skills (2014, 50). Their findings suggest that even on an advanced level, EFL learners must invest much energy in speaking situations. In addition, they present the notion that the pressure and anxiety is transferrable from the mother tongue to second languages, since all the negative experiences connected to speaking in front of an audience in the mother tongue reflect future situations where one is required to speak publicly in a second language (2014, 60).

Jangir and Govinda state that fear of public speaking, performance anxiety and stage fright are identical in such sense that all share the feature of being terrified of speaking in front of an audience (2018, 126). They present the assumption that all professionals suffering from public speaking anxiety (PSA) tend to avoid anxiety-inducing presentation situations, but when the situations cannot be avoided, the situations are endured while experiencing intense anxiety. The avoidance, however, leads to decreased competence and lack of exposure to public speaking performance which again increases the level on PSA and lowers the language confidence level (ibid.). In addition to Atas' (2015) findings of theatre techniques' positive impact on FLA levels, Jangir and Govinda's research suggests that using behavioural exercises as interventions lowered the levels of their subjects' public speaking anxiety (2018, 129).

The notion of public speaking anxiety generated by excess attention to self was presented by Daly, Vangelisti and Lawrence (1989). They suggest that irrational attention to one's self is the reason for high levels of public speaking anxiety and that

speakers with high PSA tend to perform poorly in front of an audience (1989, 903). People with high PSA tend to self-evaluate their performance as poor and they usually are proven to perform less effectively than people with lower levels of PSA (1989, 904). The high levels of PSA were reported to be seen as less eye contact with the audience, nervous gestures, pausing and checking out their notes repeatedly during the speech. Subjects with high levels of PSA reported enjoying the performance less and saw themselves perform less successfully than subjects with low levels of PSA (1989, 910). It was stated that the excess focus on self thus ignoring the surroundings and the audience during the performance was found as one of the factors why PSA affects the performance (1989, 912).

2.4 MA Theses by Ljungqvist and Broholm

The two MA theses priorly published at University of Turku differ from the current study mainly based on the subjects. Maiju Ljungqvist (2003) studied language anxiety experienced by groups of children aged 12 and 16 and by seniors of upper secondary school. All of the subjects attended CLIL-classes. The other thesis by Maria Broholm (2006) studied anxiety, motivation and self-efficacy of learning English among students of engineering at Turku University of Applied Sciences. Ljungqvist's results suggest that anxiety decreases with age and that linguistically talented pupils are less anxious than the ones struggling with languages. She did not find any significant differences between the sexes (2003, 36–47). The results of Broholm's study propose that using English in spoken contexts caused relatively high levels of anxiety among the subjects. The subjects were quite confident in their level of language efficiency, but subjects who had lower grades in English did not have the same confidence and rather avoided situations where speaking in English was expected than engaged in them (2006, 65–108).

2.5 BA Thesis by Mäkinen

The current study is linked to my BA Thesis published at the University of Turku in 2013. The BA Thesis was a comparative study on FLA experienced by students at the University of Turku (UTU) and Turku University of Applied sciences (TUAS). The study had 63 subjects, all students at the time with 48 students at UTU and 15 at TUAS

(Mäkinen 2013, 5). The questionnaire for the study was based on the PRCA-24 tool and the analysis was made with a simple percentage analysis. The main findings were that UTU students had lower levels of anxiety than TUAS students, males studying at UTU were more confident than females and males studying at TUAS were less confident than the corresponding female group (Mäkinen 2013, 15).

3 Methods and materials

This chapter firstly introduces the materials of the study and moves on to a discussion of the research methods. The materials section presents the target group and the questionnaire along with an introduction to the research questions. The research methods section introduces the nature of the research, how the results of the questionnaire were analysed and what analysing tools were used.

3.1 Materials

This section first introduces the target group of the study, then moves on to introducing the questionnaire and its two parts.

3.1.1 Target group

The target group consists of 56 young professionals. Social media platforms Instagram and Facebook were used to reach willing participants with a degree either from a university or university of applied sciences. The internet link to the questionnaire was sent via email to those who approached with their contact details. In addition to the emailed links, the link was published as a status update on Facebook to reach participants who wanted to stay entirely anonymous. The respondents were informed that all information would be analysed anonymously and used as research data in this study.

3.1.2 Questionnaire

The method for collecting data was an online questionnaire created by using Webropol. The questionnaire consisted of seven background questions in Finnish and 24 statements in English. The questionnaire was answered anonymously with an option to provide contact information as a consent for the researcher to contact the subjects with further questions to execute qualitative interviews. 19 of the subjects chose to provide their contact details. Below the two parts of the questionnaire are described in more detail.

3.1.2.1 Background questions

The purpose of the seven background questions was to collect information about the subjects which was later used as a basis of the analysis. First, the subjects were asked about their gender with options female, male and x. The option x was given to suit the needs of the current societal discussion over people's freedom to determine their own sex. All of the subjects chose to describe themselves as male or female. Secondly, the subjects were to answer a question regarding their mother tongue. Thirdly, the subjects were asked to inform whether they had completed their degree at a university or university of applied sciences. Fourthly, the subjects were asked whether the main language of their studies was Finnish, English, Swedish or other. Fifthly the subjects gave the year they had completed their degree and, sixthly, how many years they had worked full time since graduating. Lastly the subjects were asked to estimate how often they use English at work, the answering options ranging from daily to never.

3.1.2.2 PRCA-24 statements

The 24 statements in English were fully based on James McCroskey's PRCA-24 tool introduced later in this section. As the tool is designed to measure communication apprehension in a classroom environment, a few adjustments were made. The adjustments were only adding the words "or a presentation" in statements regarding giving a speech (questions 26–31). These adjustments were minor, thus would not affect the analysis but essential in order to create the right mindset for the subjects. It is safe to assume that presentations are a more frequent part of everyday work than giving speeches as such. The subjects were asked to answer each question with a Likert Scale option ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). No rearrangement of the statements was made to enable the analysing tool provided by McCroskey: Statements 8 to 13 described situations when communicating in a group, statements 14 to 19 depicted situations when communicating in meetings, statements 20 to 25 portrayed situations when communicating interpersonally, and statements 26 to 31 described public speaking situations.

The PRCA-24 is the most finalised version of the tools created by McCroskey. According to McCroskey himself (www.jamesmccroskey.com), the PRCA-24 can be

regarded as being the most reliable over any earlier version of the test. It has 24 questions which are divided into four categories with six questions in each. These categories are labelled as group, meeting, interpersonal, and public. The categories consist of statements that describe different feelings experienced in specific types of spoken contexts. The group category has statements concerning situations where discussing in groups is required. The meeting category's statements are concerned with different sorts of meeting situations and the dyadic statements regard interpersonal communication contexts. The final group is about giving speeches or otherwise communicating in public situations. Through this self-evaluation form, the level of apprehension can be individually determined.

McCroskey introduces the PRCA-24 score calculation formula on his personal website (<https://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/prca24.htm>). The calculation formula is presented in detail later in the quantitative methods section 3.3.1. It was first introduced by him in 1982. The scores of the 24 statements are divided into four groups, group, meeting, interpersonal, and public. Each group consists of six statements and each Likert Scale answer option is indicated with a score value from one to five. These scores are first summed up to get four sub-scores and then the sub-scores are added together to calculate the score for overall CA. The overall scoring can vary from 24 to 120. Scores below 51 represent very low CA, scores between 51 and 80 represent average CA and scores above 80 represent high trait-like CA. The norms for the scores have been created by testing a sample of over 40 000 college students. The norms are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Norms of PRCA-24 (James McCroskey, n.d.)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total score	65.6	15.3
Group score	15.4	4.8
Meeting score	16.4	4.2
Interpersonal score	14.2	3.9
Public speaking score	19.3	5.1

The three levels of CA introduced above all have certain characteristics that define how CA is experienced. Both extreme ends on the low-high spectrum are abnormal and “suggest that the degree of apprehension you may experience in any given communication situation may not be associated with a realistic response to that situation” (McCroskey 1986, 24). This means that a person with a very low CA score does not experience any fear or anxiety communicating in situations where it is reasonable to expect such reactions and a person with very high levels of CA may experience irrational fear or anxiety towards communicating in situations where they should not be experienced. A person with average levels of CA will react to communicating depending on the situational context, so that some situations generate more fear or anxiety than others (ibid.).

Another scale was considered as the basis of the questionnaire, the widely used Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, or FLCAS, created by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986). In 1983, at the University of Texas, students taking summer classes in foreign languages were asked to participate in a “Support Group for Foreign Language Learners”. Over a third of the 225 students taking FL classes signed up for the group meetings (which is a clear indicator of the vastness of the FLA phenomenon) and 30 of them were chosen to participate. They reported suffering from various psychological symptoms of anxiety related to language learning: “freezing” when having to speak in public in a foreign language, their minds going blank when placed in testing situations and even having to build up courage outside the classroom door before entering a foreign language class. In addition to these symptoms, some reported suffering from psycho-physiological symptoms generally related to anxiety, such as perspiring, tenseness, trembling, and problems with sleeping (1986, 128). The meetings of the support group played a major role in creating the FLCAS tool.

The FLCAS tool was created for measuring FLA experienced in classroom situations. It contains 33 statements with five answering options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The statements describe different learning situations and symptoms associated with them. See examples in Table 2.

Table 2 Examples of FLCAS questions

(Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986)

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. I keep thinking that other students are better at languages than I am.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

As seen in Table 2, the questions vary from different classroom situations to everyday situations where speaking in a foreign language could be expected. There has been criticism towards Horwitz et al.'s theory on FLA along with the FLCAS tool, the most striking one being that FLA cannot actually be compared to or stated to be the same as anxiety in general but is an independent statue with its own implications (Tran 2012, 73). The FLCAS tool was presented to introduce another possible tool for measuring language anxiety. Due to the topic of the current study and the subjects' role as graduates lacking foreign language classroom situations once employed, PRCA-24 was used as the only measure.

3.2 Research questions

There was one main and three general research questions in the current study.

1. What is the relationship between communication apprehension and the length of full-time employment after the completion of the final degree?
2. What is the relationship between communication apprehension and the amount of English used at work?
3. Are there differences in levels of communication apprehension with regards to the subjects' educational background?
4. Are there differences in levels of communication apprehension between the sexes?

The first research question was the main research question of the current study. It aimed to examine the relation between the subjects' levels of communication apprehension and years they had worked full time after graduation. As the study aimed to investigate how English CA was experienced in the everyday environment at work, the main research question was supported by the following three general research questions.

This study pursued to answer the research questions above. As McCroskey, Simpson and Richmond (1982), Farizidad and Simin (2015), Franz, Marlow and Wathen (2005) and Rafeek et al. (2013) suggest, the quantitative part of the study was expected to show higher levels of CA reported by female respondents than male respondents. Based on the findings of Mäkinen (2013), respondents with a degree from university of applied sciences were expected to report higher levels of CA than the respondents with a university degree. Atas' (2015) findings suggest that the frequency of spoken English would affect the levels of CA which was expected to be the result of this study.

The qualitative part of the empirical study was expected to answer the main research question. As proposed by Hashemi (2011), the roles of the language teacher and the classroom environment were expected to be reasons why the respondents would report the years spent working after graduation in professional roles had affected their

confidence in a positive way and thus had lowered the levels of CA and FLA. Another factor for the change in the respondents' language speaking confidence was expected to be increased age, as Hismanoglu (2013), Elmenfi (2016) and Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) suggest.

3.3. Research methods

The study had two empirical parts. Firstly, a quantitative analysis was conducted based on the entire sample of 56 respondents. Secondly, a qualitative analysis was conducted based on the answers given by 12 of the subjects who had given their contact information with the permission to be contacted with further questions. The quantitative method will be first presented and followed up with the qualitative method.

3.3.1 Quantitative method

After all the responses to the questionnaire were received, the numbers were entered in SPSS. The answers to the background questions were converted into numbers to conduct a statistical analysis, them being the independent variables. The Likert Scale answers to the 24 statements were also turned into numbers so that 1 stands for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Undecided, 4 for Agree and 5 for Strongly Agree. The points were then added up according to the official point calculation instruction stated by the instructions of the PRCA-24 tool displayed in Table 3 below. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of each statement.

Table 3 PRCA-24 score calculation formula (James McCroskey, n.d.)

Group name	Calculation formula
Group score	$18 - (2+4+6) + (1+3+5)$
Meeting score	$18 - (8-9-12) + (7+10+11)$
Interpersonal score	$18 - (14+16+17) + (13+15+18)$
Public speaking score	$18 - (19+21+23) + (20+22+24)$

Once the scores of each category were calculated, the overall CA score was defined by adding up each group score. These calculations were done manually, and triple checked for accuracy. Once the preparatory measures were done, a SPSS analysis was conducted. For the main research question, the means of overall CA and

value means for the years of employment were compared. After the comparison of means, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to calculate the statistical significance of the differences between the variables. Lastly, a Spearman's rho test was conducted to test the correlation between the overall CA and length of employment. The mean comparison procedure introduced above was repeated with the data which responds to the second research question, with the exception that the comparison was done between the means of overall CA and the value means of the frequency English is used at work. The relationship between these variables was tested by conducting a Mann-Whitney U test. The procedure was the same analysing the data for the third research question, with the exception that the means which were compared were of the overall CA and of the two educational backgrounds. During the comparison of the means, an interesting finding occurred: the female respondents' score differed significantly based on their educational background. The statistical significance on this finding was tested with an additional Mann-Whitney U test. The analysis of the last research question, which studies the relationship between levels of CA and gender, was conducted first by analysing the overall CA and later in smaller sections. A mean comparison was done between the overall CA and gender means followed up with a Mann-Whitney U test to test the statistical significance of the gender difference. For the purpose of revealing even the slightest nuances in the gender differences, the data was analysed further in four parts by comparing the means of each group scores and genders.

3.3.2 Qualitative Method

The 19 respondents who had voluntarily given their contact information were sent an email containing seven follow-up questions. Two of the 19 respondents were sent one additional question regarding the public speaking part of the questionnaire, since their public speaking scores differed radically from their scores on the group, meeting and interpersonal part. One respondent had left a comment where he said he had answered some questions with an "Undecided" since the reaction would be situationally dependent. He was asked to describe in detail what he meant. The seven questions were as follows:

1. How old are you?
2. What is your job title?
3. How would you describe your personality? (e.g. shy, brave, outgoing, introverted etc.)
4. Describe a few situations when you are usually required to communicate in English at work.
5. What kind of situations do you prefer when communicating in English? (i.e. group meetings, privately face to face, giving presentations etc.)
6. Do you feel that your confidence in communicating in English has changed during the years you have worked since completing your degree? How? What do you think has been the main reason(s) for the change?
7. If you compare communicating in English at work and communicating in English in classroom environment back when you were studying, do you feel as if professionalism has brought you more confidence in communicating in English or vice versa? How?

The two respondents with remarkably higher score in the public speaking part were sent the question below

You reported higher levels of public speaking anxiety, i.e. giving speeches makes you more nervous than other communicating situation. Why do you think that is the case?

The respondent who reported to have marked statements which were situationally dependent with an “undecided” was sent the following additional question

In your answers you indicated that each statement answered with "Undecided" means that the reaction depends on the audience/situation. Could you give a few examples of different situations; When do you feel that the audience/situation makes you more nervous than normal? What kind of audience/situation makes you more relaxed?

The qualitative analysis was conducted by first summarizing the answers to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to reach a more general impression of the age distribution and personality features of the respondents, situations when respondents are required to use English at work and situations where the respondents would prefer to communicate in English. Answers to questions 6 and 7 were analysed more closely by grouping the answers according to conjunctive features. The additional questions presented above were analysed separately. All

the answers were analysed anonymously and only the gender, age and job title were revealed attached to each answer provided.

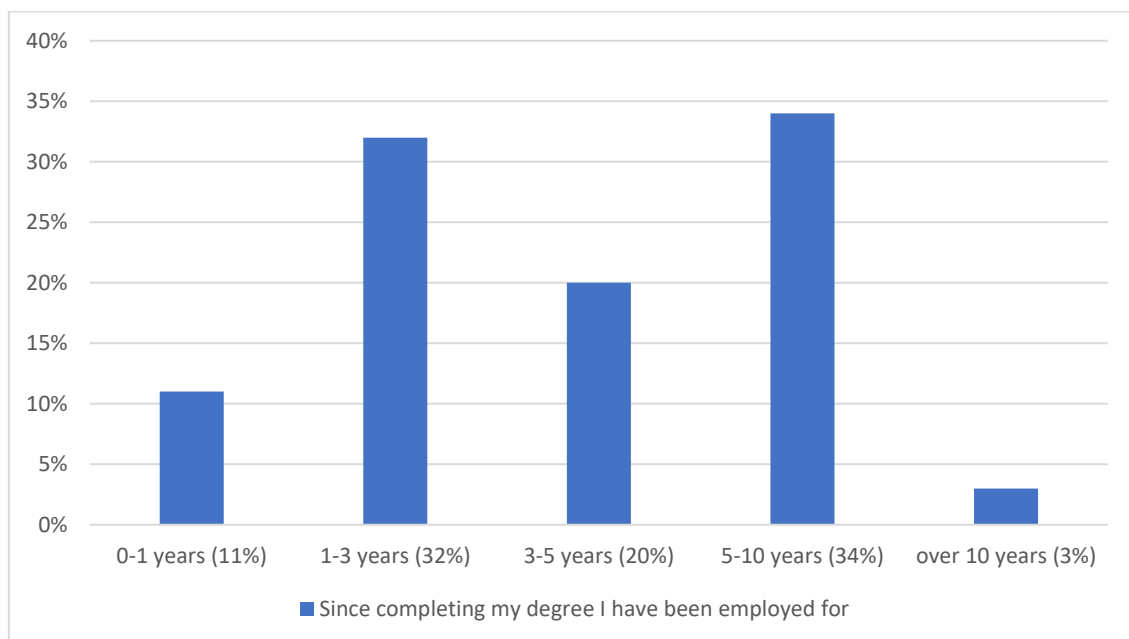
4 Results

This section of the thesis is divided in three parts. Firstly, the results of the background questions are introduced. Secondly, the results of the quantitative analysis are presented and lastly, the introduction of the qualitative results is given.

4.1 Background questions

The questionnaire was answered by 56 young professionals, 41 females (73%) and 15 males (27%). 31 of the subjects were university graduates (55%) and 25 had graduated from University of Applied Sciences (45%). 55 reported Finnish as their mother tongue and one respondent was a Swedish native. 44 of the subjects had completed their studies in Finnish, three of them in Swedish and nine of the subjects reported English as the main language of their studies. All the subjects had completed their degree between 2008 and 2018 and had been employed from 0 to 10+ years after graduation. The distribution between the length of employment in percentages is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Length of full-time employment after graduation

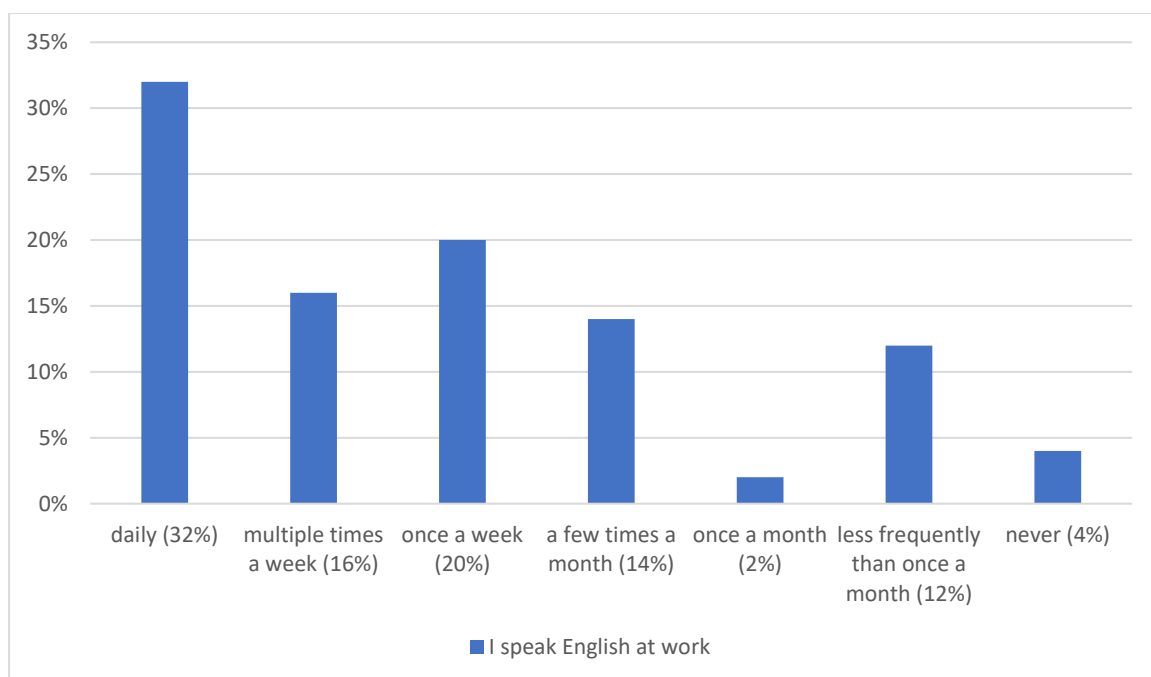


As seen in Figure 1, 11% of the respondents had been employed full-time for one year or less since completing their degree. 32% of the respondents had been working full-

time from one to three years and 20% from three to five years. 34% of the respondents reported an employment period of five to three years. This group is the biggest single group of the respondents, as over a third of the respondents reported they had been working from five to ten years since completing their degree. Only 3% of the respondents had been working full-time for ten years or more.

The results of the background question regarding the frequency of usage of English at work portray the importance of English skills in the present day working life. 48% of the respondents reported they use English at work daily or multiple times a week and 68% reported they use English at work at least once a week. None of the respondents were informed that the questionnaire would contain questions about English usage before they agreed to fill in the questionnaire. This suggests none of the respondents participated in this study on the basis they are likely to use English more frequently than others. This suggests the statement on the importance of English skills based on the results is valid. All the percentages are shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 Frequency of English used at work



As seen in Figure 2, the subjects reported using English frequently at work. 18 subjects (32%) reported they spoke English at work daily, nine subjects (16%) reported they use English at work multiple times a week and 11 subjects (20%) proclaimed to use English at least once a week. The remaining 18 subjects reported they speak English a few

times a month or less frequently. The role of English skills as a required asset is emphasized by these results, since 48% of the respondents reported they use English in communication at least once a week.

4.2 Quantitative Results

This section will introduce the results of the quantitative analysis. The introduction is done by presenting the results in the same order as the research questions are presented above. The means in Tables 4, 7, 9 and 12 represent the mean of overall CA score which can vary between 24 and 120. The means in Tables 14, 15, 16 and 17 represent the mean of CA in each group which can vary between 6 and 24.

4.2.1 CA and Length of Employment

The results introduced in this section correspond with the main research question: “What is the relationship between communication apprehension and the length of full-time employment after the completion of the final degree?” The analysis was conducted by first comparing the means between the answering options (Table 4) and then a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to test the statistical significance of the relationship between the two variables (Table 5).

Table 4 A comparison of means between CA and length of employment

Gender	The amount of years worked full-time	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	0-1 years	58.00	1	.
	1-3 years	60.67	6	13.74
	3-5 years	24.00	1	.
	5-10 years	61.14	7	18.80
	Total	58.27	15	17.59
Female	0-1 years	69.29	7	18.07
	1-3 years	56.55	11	11.06
	3-5 years	59.11	9	17.12
	5-10 years	52.42	12	16.35
	over 10 years	46.00	2	11.31
	Total	57.56	41	15.95
Total	0-1 years	67.88	8	17.20
	1-3 years	58.00	17	11.81
	3-5 years	55.60	10	19.59
	5-10 years	55.63	19	17.31
	over 10 years	46.00	2	11.31
	Total	57.75	56	16.24

Means can vary between 24-120

The mean of male respondents varied between 24.00 and 61.14, the mean for the whole sample being 58.27. The standard deviation varied from 18.80 to 13.74, but as there were no more than one respondent who replied “0-1 years” and “3-5 years” no standard deviation for them was found. The total standard deviation was 17.59. The mean for the female sample varied between 46.00 and 69.29, the mean for the total sample being 57.56. The standard deviation varied from 11.05 to 18.07 and the total standard deviation was 15.95. The mean for the whole sample with no sex divide varied from 46.00 to 67.88, the overall mean being 57.75. The standard deviation varied from 11.31 to 19.59 and the overall standard deviation was 16.24. It is noteworthy to point out the high score of the female sample for those who had been working for 0-1 years after graduation. The mean was 69.29 with standard deviation of 18.07 which implies significant individual differences between the respondents’ levels of CA.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to study the statistical relationship between the length of employment after graduation and the level of CA. The differences between the groups were compared to find out whether there exists a difference between the groups. The overall scores of PRCA-24 was set as the test variable and

grouping was done based on the five answering options to question six on the questionnaire. The answering options were indicated with a number (1 = 0–1 years, 2 = 1–3 years, 3 = 3–5 years, 4 = 5–10 years, 5 = 10+ years). The results are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Kruskal-Wallis test (CA and length of employment)

Chi-Square	4.541
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.338

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicate a statistical significance level of .338. These results suggest that no statistically significant relationship between the overall CA scores and years of full-time employment after graduation exists. After the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted, a Spearman's test was done to test the correlation between the overall CA and years of full-time employment. The results are presented below in Table 6.

Table 6 Spearman's correlation (CA and length of employment)

		I have been working since graduating for	Total
Spearman's rho	I have been working since graduating for	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	56
Total		Correlation Coefficient	-.215
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.112
		N	56

The Spearman's correlation test resulted in a statistical significance of .112 which means the relationship is below .05 thus statistically insignificant. However, the test shows a negative correlation value of -.215 which seems to imply that the larger the amount of years of full-time employment after graduation, the lower the level of overall CA. As seen in Table 4, respondents who had worked for 0-1 years after completing their degree had remarkably higher CA scores than the respondents who had worked

for over 10 years after graduating. When the negative correlation of Table 3 is taken into consideration, the results imply that the length of employment may have an anxiety-reducing effect. The sample of this study was too small to prove the relationship or correlation, but it can be assumed that with a larger sample, statistical significance could be found.

4.2.2 CA and the Frequency of English at Work

The results introduced in this section correspond with the second research question: “What is the relationship between communication apprehension and the amount of English used at work?” The analysis was conducted by first comparing the means between the answering options (Table 7) and then a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to test the statistical significance of the differences between the respondents who use English daily and the other respondents who use English less frequently (Table 8).

Table 7 A comparison of means (CA and amount of English used at work)

Gender	How frequently English is used at work	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	daily	46.33	6	22.11
	multiple times a week	66.00	4	9.66
	once a week	69.00	1	.
	a few times a month	66.00	1	.
	once a month	63.00	1	.
	less frequently than once a month	58.00	1	.
	never	76.00	1	.
	Total	58.27	15	17.59
Female	daily	50.58	12	18.39
	multiple times a week	57.50	6	15.10
	once a week	60.00	9	12.42
	a few times a month	60.86	7	12.48
	less frequently than once a month	63.67	6	20.98
	never	60.00	1	.
	Total	57.56	41	15.95
Total	daily	49.17	18	19.16
	multiple times a week	60.90	10	13.30
	once a week	60.90	10	12.05
	a few times a month	61.50	8	11.70
	once a month	63.00	1	.
	less frequently than once a month	62.86	7	19.27
	never	68.00	2	11.31
	Total	57.75	56	16.24

The means can vary between 24-120.

The mean for male respondents varied between 46.33 and 76.00. The standard deviation could only be calculated for the first two options, “daily” and “multiple times a week” and varied from 9.67 to 22.11. The mean for the overall scoring for males was 58.27 and the standard deviation 17.59. The means for the female respondents varied between 50.58 and 63.67 and the standard deviation was between 12.42 and 20.98. The mean for the whole sample of females was 57.56 and the standard deviation 15.95. The means for the whole sample including all respondents varied between 49.17 and 68.00 and the standard deviation between 11.31 and 19.27. The mean for the overall scores for the whole sample was 57.75 and the standard deviation was 16.25.

As seen above in Table 3, the 18 respondents who reported using English at work daily had a CA mean of 49.17 which was remarkably lower than the means of respondents who reported using English multiple times a week or less often. This implies that people who use English daily have lower levels of CA than people who use English less frequently. The means of “multiple times a week”, “once a week”, “a few times a month”, “once a month”, “less frequently than once a month” and “never” were combined and the mean was tested against the “daily” mean. The analysis was done by conducting a Mann-Whitney U test. The results are introduced in Table 8.

Table 8 Mann-Whitney U test (CA and amount of English used at work)

Mann-Whitney U	188.000
Wilcoxon W	359.000
Z	-2.704
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.007

The Mann-Whitney U test resulted in a statistically significant value of 0.007. These results strongly imply that the respondents who reported using English at work daily had lower levels of CA than the respondents who reported using English multiple times a week or less frequently.

4.2.3 CA and Educational Background

This section of the results corresponds with the third research question: “Are there differences in levels of communication apprehension with regards to the subjects’ educational background?” The analysis was conducted by first comparing the means between the two educational backgrounds (Table 9) and then a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to study the statistical significance of the relationship between the overall CA scores and educational background (Table 10). Lastly, an additional Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to study the differences within the female sample based on the educational background (Table 11).

Table 9 Comparison of Means (CA and educational background)

Gender	Degree	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	University	57.29	7	16.07
	University of Applied Sciences	59.13	8	19.89
	Total	58.27	15	17.59
Female	University	61.33	24	17.78
	University of Applied Sciences	52.24	17	11.40
	Total	57.56	41	15.95
Total	University	60.42	31	17.23
	University of Applied Sciences	54.44	25	14.59
	Total	57.75	56	16.24

The mean for male respondents who had completed their degree in a university was 57.23 and 59.13 for those who had completed their degree in a university of applied sciences. The standard deviation for male university graduates was 16.07 and for male university of applied sciences graduates 19.89. The overall mean and standard deviation for male respondents are the same as seen in Tables 1, 3 and 5. The mean for female respondents who had completed their degree in a university was 61.33 and 52.24 for those who had completed their degree in a university of applied sciences. The standard deviation for female university graduates was 17.78 and for female university of applied sciences graduates 11.40. The mean for all respondents who had completed their degree in a university was 60.42 and 54.44 for those who had completed their degree in a university of applied sciences. The standard deviation for all university graduates was 17.23 and all university of applied sciences graduates 14.59.

Table 10 Mann-Whitney U test (CA and educational background)

Mann-Whitney U	302.500
Wilcoxon W	627.500
Z	-1.402
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.161

The Mann-Whitney U test showed a statistical significance of .161 which is below .05 thus implies no statistical significance was found. It was expected that the results would follow the same pattern as in Mäkinen's study (2013), but the findings are opposite:

Respondents with a university degree reported slightly higher levels of CA than respondents with a degree from university of applied sciences.

As seen in Table 9, the results between female respondents have a remarkable difference in the means between the educational backgrounds, as females with a university degree reported 9.09 higher scores on the average than the corresponding female sample with a university of applied sciences degree. This difference was seen worthy of further analysis, thus an additional Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to test the statistical significance. Results of the test are seen below in Table 11.

Table 11 Mann-Whitney U test (Educational background within the female sample)

Mann-Whitney U	132.000
Wilcoxon W	285.000
Z	-1.907
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.057

The test resulted in a value of .057, which is statistically insignificant. However, the value approaches the significance level of .05 which implies to the direction that a relationship does exist between the educational background. This is an interesting implication, which could be researched further. The small size of the sample of this study may be the reason why the statistical significance of the relationship could not be proven.

4.2.4 CA and Gender

The results in this section correspond to the last research question: “Are there differences in levels of communication apprehension between the sexes?” The analysis was conducted by firstly analysing overall CA scores to study the relationship between the sexes and the overall CA scores (Table 12). The statistical significance was tested with Mann-Whitney U test (Table 13). Secondly, each group’s scores were analysed individually by conducting a comparison of means (Tables 14–17).

4.1.4.1 Overall CA and Gender

Table 12 A comparison of means (overall CA and gender)

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	58.27	15	17.59
Female	57.56	41	15.95
Total	57.75	56	16.24

Means can vary between 24-120

The mean for male respondents was 58.27 with a standard deviation of 17.59. The mean for female respondents was 57.56 with a standard deviation of 15.94. The mean for the whole sample was 57.75 with a standard deviation of 16.24.

Table 13 Mann-Whitney U test (overall CA and gender)

Mann-Whitney U	280,000
Wilcoxon W	1141,000
Z	-,509
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,611

The statistical significance of the gender differences was tested by conducting Mann-Whitney U test, which resulted in statistical difference of .611. The difference between the sexes was not statistically significant since it resulted in a value larger than .05. A small difference between the means of the sexes did exist, as the mean for male respondents was .70 higher than females. This contradicts the findings of the research and research hypothesis presented earlier which both suggest that females have higher levels of CA than male respondents but supports Piechurska-Kuciel's (2012) findings with no significant difference between the sexes. Due to the higher mean value of the male respondents and the contradiction to the results of Piechurska-Kuciel's research mentioned, each group score means were compared separately to study the difference further.

4.2.4.2 Gender and Group, Meeting, Interpersonal and Public CA

Table 14 A Comparison of means (group CA and gender)

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	14.47	15	4.93
Female	12.95	41	4.74
Total	13.36	56	4.80

Means can vary between 6-24.

The mean for the male respondents was 14.47 with a standard deviation of 4.93. The mean for the female respondents was 12.96 with a standard deviation of 4.74. The mean for the whole sample was 13.36 with a standard deviation of 4.8.

Table 15 A comparison of means (meeting CA and gender)

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	14.53	15	4.31
Female	14.02	41	4.23
Total	14.16	56	4.22

Means can vary between 6-24

The mean for male respondents was 14.53 with a standard deviation of 4.31. The mean for female respondents was 14.02 with a standard deviation of 4.23. The mean for the whole sample was 14.16 with a standard deviation of 4.22.

Table 16 A comparison of means (interpersonal CA and gender)

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	13.40	15	4.14
Female	13.41	41	4.20
Total	13.41	56	4.15

Means can vary between 6-24

The mean for male respondents was 13.40 with a standard deviation of 4.14. The mean for female respondents was 13.41 with a standard deviation of 4.20. The mean for the whole sample was 13.41 with a standard deviation of 4.15.

Table 17 A comparison of means (public speaking CA and gender)

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	15.87	15	6.22
Female	17.49	41	4.82
Total	17.05	56	5.22

Means can vary between 6-24.

The mean for the male respondents was 15.87 with a standard deviation of 6.22. The mean for the female respondents was 17.49 with a standard deviation of 4.82. The mean for the whole sample was 17.05 with a standard deviation of 5.22. The overall mean of public speaking CA was remarkably higher than of the other groups. The difference will be further discussed in the following section.

4.3 Qualitative results

The purpose for the qualitative part was to receive more information to answer the main research question of the study, thus the answers to the first five questions of the interview form will be summarized and introduced more generally than questions six and seven which both will be introduced in detail.

The additional questions were sent to the 19 respondents who had given their contact details thus agreeing to be interviewed further. The response rate to the questions was 63.2% since 12 out of the 19 forms sent were returned. Out of the 12 respondents four were male (33.3%) and eight females (66.6%). The age of the respondents varied between 28 and 33 with a mean of 30.13 years for the females, 30.50 years for the males and 30.25 years for the whole sample. Ten (83.3%) respondents described their personality as outgoing or extroverted and two (16.7%) reported to be shy or introverted. Five (41.7%) of the respondents had low levels of CA and the remaining seven (58.3%) respondents had average levels of CA. These levels were defined based on the answers given to the first questionnaire. The mean for the CA scores for the respondents was 53.17 with a standard deviation of 12.87.

The respondents described various situations where they are required to use English in oral communication at work. All except one of the respondents reported having face to face meetings with customers, employees or colleagues in English. Skype and conference calls with customers or colleagues abroad were the second

most occurring type of contact with half of the respondents reporting such communication situations in English. Face to face meetings with more than one colleague or customer was a type of communication reported by three respondents and two respondents described giving presentation and speeches as a fixed part of their communication at work. One respondent reported being in sole charge of onboarding new employees in English.

The fifth question requested the respondents to list situations in which they most prefer to speak English at work. All except one of the respondents reported that they rather speak English one on one and face to face. One of the respondents described they preferred having a face to face conversation with a non-native speaker of English. Three of the respondents described presentations and speeches their least preferred type of communication in English. These three answers were as follows

- (1) I don't really have a preference as long as it is not a presentation of some kind. I am still not totally comfortable giving them even with years of training and experience. It must have something to do with the fact of being the sole center of attention. My anxiety in these situations is largely affected by the level of expertise in the audience.

Male, 29 years old, Research Coordinator

- (2) I'm quite comfortable with group meetings and f2f conversations but when it comes to some now-you-must-act-very-convincing type of presentations I tend to get slightly nervous.

Male, 33 years old, Customer Success Manager

- (3) I prefer communicating face to face rather than over the phone. I can easily communicate in group meetings and 1-to-1 with a person, but I try to avoid all kinds of presentations.

Female, 29 years old, Consultant

As seen in Table 10, the mean for the public speaking score was higher than in other groups: the mean for the Group score was 13.36, the mean for the Meeting score was 14.16, the mean for the Interpersonal score was 13.41 and the mean for the Public score 17.05. This difference supports the three answers displayed above. The three

respondents chose to highlight public speaking situations as the only type of communication situation they would avoid. The research by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), Lintunen and Skaffari (2014), Jangri and Govinda (2018) and Daly, Vangelisti and Lawrence (1989) support the results.

The sixth question is strongly linked with the main research question. The respondents were asked to determine whether their confidence in communicating in English has changed during the years they have worked since graduation, how it has developed and suggest reasons for the change. The answers of those who do not think their level of confidence has changed will be first introduced.

- (4) I don't think it has changed as i have lived in English speaking countries before, during and after completing my degree. I feel confident when speaking English as i use it almost daily in my personal life as well.

Female, 31 years old, Receptionist/Event Hostess

- (5) Right after graduation I worked mostly in Finnish for almost a year. During that time my English proficiency went substantially down, and I guess I lost some confidence in my English skills. Now that I am back in using English in my daily life (as in university), I am more confident. I guess the main reason for change has been that the so-called back-end user of my skills, eg. customers, have been either English or Finnish speaking.

Female, 28 years old, International Affairs Manager

- (6) It hasn't much changed I think for I have at least tried to use it regularly in any appropriate situation. Maybe some confidence has occurred during the past working years, yet mostly due to my age and the self-confidence which has grown aside

Female, 30 years old, Fitness Instructor

The respondent in example 4 states her level of confidence has not changed since she has actively used English while living in English speaking countries before, during and after her studies. She uses English daily nowadays. Her answer suggests the daily usage of English has been part of her daily life for years which is an understandable reason why there has been no change in her confidence. The respondent in example 5 states her confidence in speaking English went down first after graduation but has since increased due to the frequency of English used at work, which is supported by the statistical significance seen in Table 8. She emphasizes the meaning of the

influence of the native speakers she has been communicating with as a positive factor for the improvement of her confidence, which again is supported by the research of Humphries (2011) introduced earlier in section 2.2.3. The respondent in example 6 declares that she has tried to speak English in any suitable situation, work related or not. However, she identifies some positive change in her confidence but pins it to the general increase of self-confidence and increase of age.

Six of the respondents felt very strongly that their confidence has increased after stepping into full time employment. The answers of those six respondents are presented in examples 7–12 below.

- (7) My confidence in communicating in English has definitely become better since I completed my degree. I am not as harsh on myself as I used to be and accept that my English skills are not perfect. I understand that the most important thing is that I communicate clearly, I'm not misunderstood and that I do not misunderstand others due to lack of language skills. Advancing my English skills is a bonus which comes slowly with time but it's nothing I am actively reflecting upon. I feel that in school and during my years at university the focus was very much on the mistakes one made (spelling, pronouncing etc), which caused quite a lot of anxiety and lack of self-confidence. At work I have noticed that people don't care about minor spelling mistakes or lack of vocabulary, which has increased my self-confidence as well as willingness to improve.

Female, 31 years old, Senior Tax Manager

- (8) Yes. I gained a lot of confidence in my last years in University as my role as an expert started to solidify in my mind. After graduating I have worked in positions where I have been able to continue that progress and my confidence has risen accordingly.

Male, 29 years old, Research Coordinator

- (9) Yes. I have lived abroad where I wasn't able to use my mother language at all at work. I have never had any problem to speak in English but of course it is always a bit challenging when you start to work in a new place and you need check what kind of vocabulary you need there. Main reasons are that you haven't had any other options but to speak English.

Female, 30 years old, HR Consultant

- (10) A lot. I think my vocabulary hasn't changed that much, but the way I speak has improved significantly during my career. The main reason might have been that I have used English in most of my jobs, and more importantly, worked abroad in a company, where they have English as a company language.

Female, 29 years old, Consultant

- (11) Yes. Because I've gain the competence and the authority to stand behind my views and opinions relying on some theoretical facts and measures too. And this is not a language matter. Main reason about the improvement of my English is that I get to use it on almost daily basis and I'm personally very eager to improve.

Male, 33 years old, Customer Success Manager

- (12) Previously using English was a cause of stress but now I don't even think about it. I can change between languages quite quickly. I think the reason is both in increased confidence as well as in experience and improved skills.

Female, 32 years old, Service Designer/Project Manager

The answers above suggest that the respondents acknowledge various reasons why their confidence in communicating in English has improved during their years of employment. Respondents in examples 8 and 11 indicated that their professionalism or grown expertise has been the main reason for the increased confidence. Respondent in example 7 stated the shift of focus from grammar and pronunciation to being able to communicate correctly content-wise has been a major contributor to the increased confidence to speak English. Respondents in examples 9 and 10 both declared that working abroad and being forced to use English has been a factor which had affected their level of confidence to speak English. The respondent in example 12 compares the situations she was in before and at the time she answered the question. The most interesting finding in her answer is that she actually felt stressed earlier but feels as if the experience gained along with improvement in English skills had been the important factors of the increase in her confidence.

There were three respondents whose answers were slightly ambiguous. They could not state for certain whether their confidence had increased during the years they have worked after graduation or are hesitant about the reasons for the change:

- (13) Yes and no - I have always been quite confident when communicating in English. My English skills are based on a year spent abroad, and during that time I became a confident communicator. Of course, my professional vocabulary has developed after I started to use English at work, which must have had an effect on my confidence in English as a working language.

Female, 30 years old, Legal Counsel

- (14) I think that my confidence is getting better all the time. After I graduated, my confidence was pretty high, but I really didn't have to communicate in English because of my dead-end job. Now English is playing a big part in my daily job. So mostly I have got better in it because I have had to use it more regularly.

Male, 32 years old, Supply Chain Manager

- (15) Depends on which degree... Since I did my degree in Eng. Phil. I've communicated a lot more with native speakers, which has given me a lot more confidence to speak English anywhere. Also, it's a lot easier to understand other non-native speakers' accents nowadays after living abroad for some time in international communities (studies and work) where the lingua franca is English.

Male, 28 years old, Junior Business Intelligence Consultant

To support the results seen in Table 8, the respondent in example 14 indicates the accelerated frequency of English usage at work as the reason for the increased confidence. The respondents in examples 13 and 15 clearly base their confidence to speak English on time spent living abroad before or during their studies. What is interesting in example 15, is that the respondent has a BA degree in English Philology and a MA degree in Economics but thinks his confidence in speaking English has improved during his degree in Economics and not during his degree in English. In addition, he states that communicating with native speakers of English has increased his confidence which is a notion surfaced now for the second time in the answers and supported by Humphries (2011).

In summary, the answers presented suggest that 50% of the respondents were quite certain their level of confidence in speaking English had increased during the years worked since completing their degree, 25% think their confidence had not changed much and the remaining 25% were slightly hesitant whether their confidence had improved. Multiple reasons for the improved confidence surfaced, the support of professionalism and grown expertise being only one of the factors. The answers to the other question which explores the shift in the communication environment offer new perspectives to the relationship between FLA and professionalism and will be introduced next.

The last question of the questionnaire asked the respondents to compare their level of confidence in speaking English between the present as young professionals and the time they were engaged in classroom communicating situations when they were studying, and whether professionalism has brought them more confidence in communicating in English or vice versa. This question resulted in multifaceted answers with some clear-cut “yes” and “no” answers, but also factors as the classroom environment, the language teacher and increased age surfaced. Firstly, the answers advocating professionalism as the factor or one of the factors for increased confidence are presented as follows.

- (16) Absolutely! I believe that my confidence is better outside of the classroom since the focus is somewhere else than on the actual language skills. When speaking English in a working environment the focus is on a specific topic and not on the language. This makes communicating a lot more relaxed and encourages to speak without extra pressure that is caused when the focus is on grammar etc.

Female, 31 years old, Senior Tax Manager

- (17) It has, I am far less anxious in front of an audience if I feel that I can truly impart some knowledge or wisdom to them. If I do not feel confident about the subject I am communicating I might start feeling like a fraud or that I am wasting everyone's time. If I run into a situation like this I can usually employ some coping mechanism, such as introducing discussion into the presentation. This takes the focus off myself and puts it on the audience.

Male, 29 years old, Research Coordinator

- (18) Yes, I think so, because it has targeted the use of language to a certain area of schemes, vocabulary etc. I always see the benefit of having studied English when I get to use it, as with any foreign language. In my studies there where neither much English lessons nor did I find them very useful for they weren't that specified to my branch of science. We had a Scottish teacher though.

Female, 30 years old, Fitness Instructor

- (19) Yes. When you know what you are doing and you speak from the heart it doesn't matter which language you are using. Also, when I was studying I was worried how many grammar mistakes I was doing. Nowadays I don't think about it that much because for me the most important thing is that our workers (whose supervisor I am) understands me correctly.

Female, 30 years old, HR Consultant

- (20) Yes, absolutely. Easy one because classroom situations are fake and somehow made up. Situations at work are real, interesting and always aiming towards certain consensus/solution.

Male, 33 years old, Customer Success Manager

As seen in examples 16 and 19, two of the respondents think that the shift from grammar and pronunciation focus in the classroom environment to content of communication had been the biggest reason why their confidence had changed during the time they had worked full-time. What is interesting is that the respondent in example 16 was the same as in example 7 in which she also emphasized the shift of the focus. It can be assumed that she experienced the classroom environment an FLA inducing environment. The respondent in example 17 expressed he felt that as a professional he has knowledge he can share with people, and that has brought him confidence. The coping mechanism he introduced is interesting when regarded in the light of the research by Daly, Vangelisti and Lawrence (1989) which suggested that attention to self is an anxiety inducing factor. The respondent explained he copes with uncertainty by shifting the focus away from himself on to the audience, when he asks the audience to participate in the discussion. The respondent in example 20 described classroom situations as fake and that in addition to the realness and appeal of the professional context situations, the goal-oriented approach at work had made communication in English less stressful for him. The respondent in example 18 stated the English classes she had taken when studying were not career oriented. The use of English at work was correctly targeted vocabulary and scheme-wise, which was the reason she thought her confidence has improved.

Two of the 12 respondents suggested that increased age had been one of the factors for the development of their confidence in speaking English and not professionalism alone as such. As seen in example 21, age is included as one part of the “holistic thing” but does not rule professionalism out. The respondent in example 22 stated that age had been the main reason for the change in her confidence. Age as a factor for increased confidence is supported by the research of Hismanoglu (2013),

Elmenfi (2016) and Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) introduced earlier in section 2.4.

- (21) Yes. But it's a holistic thing that has to do with me being more experienced, professional and "adult" in every way. When I'm confident in my professional talent, it somehow improves my English as well.

Female, 32 years old, Service Designer/Project Manager

- (22) I think it has more to do with age - when I was younger, I felt more insecure and wanted to be able to speak perfect English, so that I wouldn't have to be ashamed of the mistakes I made. Now I have realized that I am not native speaker and thus, making mistakes is quite OK, I have less stress about it. I guess I am not that harsh on myself anymore, either.

Female, 28 years old, International Affairs Manager

Two of the respondents approached the matter from a similar point of view. They both accounted professionalism as a factor for their increased confidence, but both found that the focus in the classroom environment was different, thus feel more confident now that the focus has shifted. See examples 23 and 24 below.

- (23) Yes and no. During my studies I was more interested in how I (or someone else) pronounced things, and I became quite self-aware of it. The good thing in that was that I feel like the quality of my spoken English was a lot better, and the bad thing was that the quantity was substantially lower than now. Now I maximize output with quality that's ok, but not even close to perfect.

Male, 28 years old, Junior Business Intelligence Consultant

- (24) Professionalism gives me some level of confidence, but what I think matters more is that your vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar don't have to be perfect in order to communicate easily at work. On the contrary, in a classroom you felt that speaking out loud would require you to know the answer and grammar perfectly.

Female, 29 years old, Consultant

The role of the language teacher and classroom environment as the creator of language anxiety has been acknowledged in the research by Hashemi (2011),

especially in inducing anxiety related to correct pronunciation as the answers above elaborate. The respondent below in example 25 emphasizes the role of the teacher as a positive influence on her language level:

- (25) When using English at school our English teacher was very strict about the way he wanted us to speak and do presentations. For example, the words used had to be professional compared to (his words) MTV English. The way he thought us to speak has stuck on me so now i automatically have a different style of speaking and i use different words when talking to my friends and when talking at work.

Female, 31 years old, Receptionist/Event Hostess

One of the respondents shortly answered the question with a “No, I don’t think my confidence has changed” (Female, 30 years old, Legal Counsel) and one reported that his level of confidence in speaking English was higher when studying:

- (26) In a classroom it was more relaxed and casual, so therefore maybe I was more confident back then. Sometimes it is hard to use the right terminology and sound professional all the time in my job. We have a good spirit in our working environment, and some people don't talk nearly as good English as me, but for me it is important to sound professional. So, in conclusion, maybe that need to sound clever makes me more nervous than in high school for example.

Male, 32 years old, Supply Chain Manager

The questions sent to all the respondents of the qualitative part of the study are presented above. As mentioned earlier, three respondents were approached with additional questions which were specifically linked to their answers to the questionnaire which the quantitative results are based on. Two of the respondents marked a higher score in the public speaking part of the PRCA24-test. They were sent an additional question asking their point of view on the reasons why they are more uncomfortable in giving speeches than in other communication situations. The answers were as follows

- (27) Well, for a quite shy person it is hard to be on a center of attention. All the people are looking at you, and no matter what they say, it doesn't get easier if you picture them naked. Maybe I get more self-aware and vulnerable when keeping speeches. Do I have something in my face, am I wearing too tight jeans and people can see my junk etc.

Male, 32 years old, Supply Chain Manager

- (28) I get nervous if I have to speak publicly, especially if I don't know my audience. I guess it would have something to do with being under constant evaluation, or not knowing the topic well enough.

Female, 30 years old, Legal Counsel

Both respondents mentioned being under evaluation as the main reason for their public speaking anxiety. The respondent in example 28 stated not knowing the topic well enough as the other reason for her PSA. The respondent in example 27 brought up the attention to self as a strong factor. Self-awareness about his appearance is clearly an anxiety-inducing factor for him. His answer strongly supports the findings of Daly, Vangelisti and Lawrence (1989).

One respondent clearly stated in the end of his questionnaire that all the answers marked with "Undecided" were audience dependent. He was asked to clarify what that signified. As seen in example 29, the respondent stated his anxiety depends on the atmosphere the audience creates.

- (29) Yes, it depends a lot whether the audience is very conservative and demanding or very laid back and open-minded. That's the only setup that really makes a difference in my behavior and tendency.

Male, 33 years old, Customer Success Manager

The answers to the additional questions seem to support the conceptualizations of situational and person-group CA. All these three respondents reported average levels of CA which clearly indicates their CA is connected to a certain situation or audience. Nevertheless, their public speaking CA was higher than other groups, which suggests their levels of PSA might be on the high spectrum.

The results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses will be combined and discussed in connection to the research questions of the study in the following section.

The following section will also present the limitations and problems of the study, to which some were implied in the results section at hand.

5 Discussion

This section will summarize the quantitative and qualitative results presented in the previous section, discuss their significance in connection to the research questions and link them further with the research presented in section 2. Possible problems and limitations of the study will be first generally reflected on and secondly in the light of the questionnaire and the interview questions.

5.1 General Discussion

In general, the results suggest that the target group reported average level of CA. In comparison to the norms of PRCA-24 seen in table 1, the mean was 8.1 lower than the mean of the 40 000 American students on which the norms are based on. This alone suggests that Finnish young professionals are less apprehensive towards communication than American students. However, this suggestion is compromised by the small size of the sample group of the study and the fact that no earlier research on a similar target group could be found. Another generalization made earlier is that fluent English skills are not considered a beneficial skill for young professionals but more as a basic requirement, which is supported by the results of the high frequency of English used at work reported by the respondents.

The analysis of the quantitative data resulted in findings which both support and contradict the research hypotheses. The main research question studied the relationship between the level of CA and length of employment. The research hypothesis was that the factor which affects the relationship between the level of CA and length of employment is, in addition to increased age, the difference between working and classroom environments. The quantitative analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between the levels of overall CA and years of employment after graduation. However not statistically significant, the negative correlation value seemed to imply the years of employment do correlate with the overall CA levels: shorter period of full-time employment implies higher levels of CA.

During the qualitative analysis, the factor of increased age surfaced. The role of age in increased language confidence levels is a remark supported Hismanoglu's (2013), Elmenfi's (2016) and Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham's (2008) studies introduced in the section 2. The role of the language teacher and classroom

environment were suggested to be a cause of increased language anxiety by Hashemi (2011). The results of the qualitative analysis support the notion, as multiple respondents indicated their levels of language anxiety has decreased since the focus has shifted from producing perfect grammar and impeccable pronunciation in a classroom environment into getting oneself understood at work related communication situations. Another interesting finding was that two of the respondents reported their confidence in communicating has improved since communicating with native speakers of English, which is a finding validated by Humphries' research (2011). In addition to the findings mentioned above, it is noteworthy to mention that two of the respondents clearly indicated that professionalism or expertise has in fact been the reason they are more confident in communicating in English at work when compared to communicating when still studying.

The second research question aimed to study the relationship between the levels of CA and frequency of English used at work. The research hypothesis relied on the research done by Atas (2015) with an assumption that the frequency of spoken English correlates with the level of CA. It was hypothesized that the more often English is used the less apprehensive is the speaker. The analysis resulted in a strong statistical significance which suggested that respondents who used English at work daily experienced lower levels of CA than the respondents who reported using English multiple times a week or less frequently.

The third research question aimed to study the relationship between the educational background and level of CA. Based on the results of Mäkinen (2013) it was hypothesized that respondents with a university of applied sciences degree would report higher levels of CA than respondents who had completed a degree in a university. The results, however, contradicted the hypothesis, since university graduates reported slightly higher CA levels than university of applied sciences graduates. However, the comparison of means within the female sample group based on the educational background resulted in an significance value which was very close to being statistically significant.

The fourth research question aimed to examine the relationship between the levels of CA and gender. The results were expected to show higher levels of CA reported by female respondents than male respondents. This hypothesis was

supported by the research by McCroskey, Simpson and Richmond (1982), Farizidad and Simin (2015), Franz, Marlow and Wathen (2005) and Rafek et al. (2013). The hypothesis was, however, invalidated since the findings suggested the CA levels between the sexes were almost equal, which is an observation supported by the research of Piechurska-Kuciel (2012). Male respondents' mean was 0.70 scores higher than females', but since the range of the PRCA-24 scoring is from 24 to 120, this is not a difference significant enough to base conclusions on.

5.2 Limitations of the study

There are limitations and possible problems in the current study which must be noted. Firstly, the limitations regarding the target group of the study are introduced. The target group was quite small which affected the results of the statistical analysis. When calculating the relationships further, more precisely in this case the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests, it is quite unusual to reach results which indicate statistical significance. In addition to the limitations of the statistical analysis, the smallness of the target group weakens the scientific reliability of any of the results of the study. Regardless of the small size of the target group, interesting findings emerged. These findings offer a selection of ideas for further research which will be introduced in the last section of this thesis. It must be noted that the process of collecting the data was efficient and quick-paced since all responses were collected within the first 48 hours after releasing the questionnaire. The CA level of one male respondent was exactly 24 which is the lowest possible score to obtain, which raises a concern whether the respondent answered the statements in the questionnaire honestly. This, however, could not be proven, thus the answers of the respondent were included in the analysis. Furthermore, the instructions of the PRCA-24 tool states that the statements must be answered based on the first impression.

Secondly, the overlapping terminology must be discussed. In section 1, the terminology of the study was presented. The data for the study was collected by using the PRCA-24 tool which can be used to measure communication apprehension in L1 as well as in foreign languages. Communication apprehension is, however, included as one of the three components of the term FLA and in the current study treated as communication apprehension of L2. This could be done since the respondents of the study were informed from the beginning to answer the questionnaire with keeping in

mind that the statements describe situations when L2, in this case English, is used. FLCAS as a measure of FLA was intentionally ruled out since it contains multiple statements depicting classroom situations which are not relevant to the topic matter of the study. The PRCA-24 test was used in the questionnaire due to its proven reliability to measure CA accurately. In addition to the accuracy of the results, the PRCA-24 test offered a prepared tool for calculating the scores and descriptions behind the meaning of each score and level of CA. However, one issue surfaced regarding the PRCA-24 test. The first of the 24 statements could be seen as arguably biased. The test started with the statement "I dislike participating in group discussions", which can generate certain predispositions in answering the statements. It can be argued that the negative connotation of the statement created an atmosphere for the respondents once they began to fill in the questionnaire. This was noted once the questionnaire was created, but since the point calculation system of PRCA-24 is based on a certain pattern, the statements could not be repositioned.

Lastly, the theoretical background of the study does not offer a strong support for the professionalism factor of CA and FLA. The aim of the current study was to explore the relationship between professionalism and levels of CA. However, the earlier research conducted on CA and FLA is strongly tied to classroom situations and has targeted students. For the purpose of this study, the theoretical background introduces the phenomena of CA and FLA and thus supports the empirical part of the study.

6 Conclusions

The aim of the study was to research communication apprehension and foreign language anxiety experienced by young professionals. Even though the study resulted in interesting findings on the relationship between CA, FLA and professionalism, the size of the sample group ruled larger generalizations out. It was noted that a relationship between CA and years of full-time employment was implied to exist to the extent that longer period of employment predicted decreased levels of CA. Along with the effect of the length of the employment period, the shift of focus from correct pronunciation and precise grammar in a classroom environment to the importance of clear content in communication at the work environment was seen as a beneficial change provided by the professionalism factor. Also, the frequency of usage of English in oral communication at work implied lower levels of CA. The importance of the educational background seemed to be almost non-existent, with the exception that the results of this study suggested the complete opposite to the results of the BA thesis introduced earlier, as the CA level reported by respondents with a degree from university of applied sciences reported lower levels of CA than respondents with a university degree. A greater difference existed within the female sample group, as females with a university degree reported close to statistically significant higher levels of CA than the corresponding female group with a degree from university of applied sciences. Contradicting the majority of the earlier research presented on gender differences in levels of CA, the current study resulted in an almost non-existent difference between the genders. However, the biggest contradiction was that males reported slightly higher levels of CA, whereas the earlier research suggested the opposite. As mentioned above, the size of the sample group of the study limits making larger generalisations based on these results. However, the results leave much room for future research which will be presented next.

Multiple ideas for future research surfaced during the quantitative analysis, and as mentioned several times earlier, most of the ideas were generated due to the small size of the sample group of the study. Firstly, the negative correlation value of the relationship between levels of CA and length of full-time employment implied it could be extremely interesting to research further. With a larger sample group of 100 or more a statistically significant result in the correlation could be expected. As a topic in the field of second language acquisition, the results might generate a need for courses for

young professionals on how to decrease levels of CA and FLA. Secondly, the comparison between the levels of CA based on whether the respondents reported using English daily or less frequently resulted in a strong statistical significance. The comparison was made on comparing the results of the group of respondents who reported using English daily against all the group which consisted of the respondents who reported using English multiple times a week, once a week, a few times a month, once a month, less frequently than once a month and never. It would be fascinating to be able to define where the line exists when the frequency of usage is too low to affect the levels of CA positively. This again would be possible with a larger group of respondents and possibly with a more detailed answering options. Thirdly, the results on the relationship between the educational background and levels of CA generated an idea for further research. As the comparison between the female respondents based on their degree resulted in a statistically significance approaching value, it could be worthy to study the effect of the educational background with a larger sample group. The earlier study conducted on the levels of language anxiety experience by university and university of applied sciences students resulted in a finding that university students reported being less apprehensive towards communication in English than students at the university of applied sciences. However, the current study resulted in an opposite finding, since CA levels of university graduates were slightly higher than the CA levels of university of applied sciences. This raises the question whether the language teaching between the institutions differs in a way that university of applied sciences graduates are brewed to be more relaxed in communicating in English at work than university graduates. In addition to the differences within the female sample based on the educational background, the results of the analysis on the relationship between CA and gender suggested an interesting finding. The results contradicted the common assumption that females tend to be more apprehensive towards communication than males. This again would be a research niche worthy of exploring further with a larger sample of Finnish higher education graduates.

This study succeeded in its aim to explore the phenomenon of communication apprehension and foreign language anxiety experienced by young Finnish professionals. To my knowledge, this study is the first to research the specific target group and resulted in interesting findings, although failed to produce generalizations on the topic. This study, as its precursors, emphasizes the role of the language teacher

and classroom environment as FLA and CA inducing enablers. The effect of the language learning experiences at secondary and higher education have long lasting consequences, which affect the everyday life of young professionals when they face communication challenges in their careers.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Survey On Foreign Language Anxiety

Please first answer the questions concerning your background information. If you have completed more than one degree, base your answers on your latest degree. If you have completed one degree and working on another one, base your answers on the degree you have completed.

Then answer the 24 statements below concerning your feelings about communicating with people in ENGLISH in your work environment. Indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, UNDECIDED, DISAGREE or STRONGLY DISAGREE with each statement. Do this by ticking one of the boxes provided next to each statement. Some of the statements may seem similar, don't be concerned about that. Work quickly and just record your first impression.

All of the information gathered will be analysed and published ANONYMOUSLY and used as data in Lotta Mäkinen's MA Thesis (University of Turku 2019).

Sama suomeksi:

Vastaa ensin kysymyksiin koskien taustaasi. Mikäli olet suorittanut enemmän kuin yhden tutkinnon, vastaa kysymyksiin tuoreimman tutkintosi perusteella. Mikäli olet suorittanut yhden tutkinnon ja suoritat parhaillaan toista, perusta vastauksesi jo suoritettuun tutkintoon.

Tämän jälkeen vastaa seuraaviin 24 väittämään koskien työympäristössä kommunikointia ENGLANTIA käyttäen valitsemalla yksi seuraavista vaihtoehtoista: TÄYSIN SAMAA MIELTÄ (Strongly Agree), SAMAA MIELTÄ (Agree), EN OSAA SANOA (Undecided), ERI MIELTÄ (Disagree) tai TÄYSIN ERI MIELTÄ (Strongly Disagree) jokaisen väittämän vieressä. Jotkin väittämistä saattavat vaikuttaa samantapaisilta, mutta älä kiinnitä huomiota siihen. Vastaa mahdollisimman nopeasti ensimmäiseen mielikuvaan perustuen.

Kaikki kerätty informaatio analysoidaan ja julkaistaan ANONYYMISTI ja käytetään tutkimusdatana Lotta Mäkinen Pro Gradu -tutkielmassa. (Turun Yliopisto 2019)

1. Olen
 - ☐ mies
 - ☐ nainen
 - ☐ x
2. Äidinkieleni on
 - ☐ suomi
 - ☐ ruotsi
 - ☐ englanti
 - ☐ muu, mikä? _____

3. Olen suorittanut tutkinnon
- ☐ yliopistossa
 - ☐ ammattikorkeakoulussa
4. Korkeakouluopintojeni pääkieli oli
- ☐ suomi
 - ☐ ruotsi
 - ☐ englanti
 - ☐ muu, mikä? _____
5. Korkeakoulututkinnon suoritusvuosi
- ☐ 2008
 - ☐ 2009
 - ☐ 2010
 - ☐ 2011
 - ☐ 2012
 - ☐ 2013
 - ☐ 2014
 - ☐ 2015
 - ☐ 2016
 - ☐ 2017
 - ☐ 2018
 - ☐ En ole vielä valmistunut, arvioitu valmistumisvuoteni on _____
 - ☐ Olen valmistunut ennen vuotta 2008, vuonna _____
6. Olen ollut tutkinnon suorittamisen jälkeen työelämässä
- ☐ 0-1 vuotta
 - ☐ 1-3 vuotta
 - ☐ 3-5 vuotta
 - ☐ 5-10 vuotta
 - ☐ yli 10 vuotta
 - ☐ En ole vielä valmistunut, mutta olen ollut täysipäiväisesti työelämässä (vuotta) _____
7. Puhun englantia työssäni
- ☐ päivittäin
 - ☐ useamman kerran viikossa
 - ☐ noin kerran viikossa
 - ☐ muutaman kerran kuukaudessa
 - ☐ noin kerran kuukaudessa
 - ☐ harvemmin kuin kerran kuukaudessa
 - ☐ en lainkaan

Tästä eteenpäin kysymykset ovat englanniksi. Pidä mielessä, että väittämät koskevat **ainoastaan** tilanteita, joissa käytät englantia kommunikointiin.

8. I dislike participating in group discussion
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
9. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
10. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
11. I like to get involved in group discussions.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
12. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
13. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

14. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
15. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
16. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
17. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
18. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
19. I am very relaxed when answering questions at meetings.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

20. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
21. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
22. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
23. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
24. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
25. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

26. I have no fear of giving a speech or a presentation.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
27. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and and rigid while giving a speech or a presentation.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
28. I feel very relaxed while giving a speech or a presentation.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
29. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech or a presentation.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
30. I face the prospect of giving a speech or a presentation with confidence.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
31. While giving a speech or a presentation I get so nervous, I forget facts I really know.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Undecided
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

32. Vastasin samaan kyselyyn vuonna 2013, jolloin kerättiin dataa kandiditutkielmaan
- kyllä
 - ei
 - en muista

33. Kiitos ajastasi, jonka käytit kyselyn täyttöön. Panoksesi on suuri apu Pro Gradu -tutkielmani loppuun saattamisessa. Kuten kyselyn alussa kerrottiin, kaikki tulokset tullaan analysoimaan anonyymeina, eikä tutkimuksessa tulla paljastamaan koehenkilöiden henkilökohtaisia tietoja. Jos kuitenkin vastauksistasi löytyy tutkimukselle relevanttia mielenkiintoista dataa ja sinuun saa olla yhteydessä lisäkysymysten muodossa, jätä alla olevaan boksiin yhteystietosi (nimi ja sähköpostiosoite tai puhelinnumero). Kaikki yhteystiedot tullaan pitämään salassa ja hävittämään heti yhteydenoton jälkeen.

Appendix 2: Summary in Finnish

Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee englannin kielen puhumisen tuottamaa ahdistusta ilmiönä, ja ilmiön roolia korkeakoulutettujen nuorten aikuisten jokapäiväisessä työelämässä. Tarkastelun kohteena on tutkinnon suorittamisen jälkeisten työvuosien määrän vaikutus koettuun kommunikoinnin aiheuttamaan ahdistukseen, sekä muiden faktorien, kuten englanniksi kommunikoinnin frekvenssin, korkeakoulutustaustan sekä sukupuolen vaikutus raportoituihin ahdistustasoihin. Tutkimuksessa selvitetään, toimivatko työvuosien määrä ja englanniksi kommunikoinnin frekvenssi jokapäiväisessä työelämässä koettua ahdistustasoa nostavina vai laskevinä tekijöinä. Korkeakoulutustaustaa sekä sukupuolta tarkastellaan ahdistustasoa potentiaalisesti määrittelevinä faktoreina. Tutkimus kohtelee kommunikoinnin aiheuttamaa ahdistusta samankaltaisena ilmiönä kuin vieraan kielen puhumisen aiheuttamaa ahdistusta, sillä tässä tutkimuksessa kommunikointiahdistusta tarkastellaan jatkuvasti nimenomaan vieraan kielen näkökulmasta, eikä siitä keskustella kommunikaation tuottamana ahdistuksena yleisellä tasolla.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys keskittyy aiempiin tutkimuksiin, joiden keskiöissä on ollut joko *kommunikointiahdistus* (eng. *communication apprehension*) tai *vieraan kielen puhumisen tuottama ahdistus* (eng. *foreign language anxiety*). Kaikki teoreettisessa viitekehyksessä keskustellut tutkimukset keskittyvät kommunikointiahdistukseen vieraan kielen näkökulmasta, joten näiden katsotaan sopivan täten tämän tutkimuksen viitekehykseksi. Kommunikaatioahdistus-termin luojaksi on ristitty James McCroskey, joka otti termin käyttöön vastineeksi aiemmin ilmiöstä käytetylle termille *esiintymispelko* (stage fright). Esimerkiksi Gilkinsonin (1942) aiemmin käyttämä termi esiintymispelko kärsi yksiulotteisuudesta, sillä se yhdistettiin tilanteisiin, joissa henkilö esiintyy julkisesti yleisön edessä (McCroskey 1970). Terminä kommunikaatioahdistus on moniulotteisempi pitäen sisällään kaikki suulliset kommunikaatiotilanteet: kahdenväliset kommunikointitilanteet, kommunikoinnin ryhmässä, esiintymisen sekä kommunikoinnin tapaamisissa.

Aiemmin on tutkittu laajasti kommunikointiahdistuksen yhteyttä sukupuoleen. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys esittelee näistä neljä tutkimusta, joiden perusteella on turvallista olettaa, että naiset kärsivät korkeammasta

kommunikointiahdistustasoista kuin miehet (McCroskey, Simpson and Richmond 1982, Farizidad and Simin 2015, Franz, Marlow and Wathen 2005 ja Rafek ym. 2013). Sukupuolen lisäksi kommunikointiahdistuksen tasoihin vaikuttavana tekijänä oletettiin olevan myös englannin kielen puhumisen frekvenssi. Aiemman tutkimustiedon valossa (Atas 2015) voitiin uskoa, että tiheämpi puhumisen frekvenssi ennustaa alempia kommunikointiahdistuksen tasoja. Koulutustaustan ollessa sidottuna vahvasti suomalaiseen kontekstiin, ei aiempaa tutkimustietoa aiheesta laajasti ole. Oma aiheeseen perustuva kandidaattityöni (2013) antoi viitteitä olettamukselle, että yliopistosta valmistuneet koehenkilöt raportoivat alempia kommunikointiahdistuksen tasoja kuin ammattikorkeakoulusta valmistuneet.

Tutkinnon suorittamisen jälkeisten työvuosien määrän vaikutusta koettuun kommunikoinnin aiheuttamaan ahdistukseen tarkasteltiin kertyneen iän ja muuttuneen kommunikointiympäristön näkökulmista. Kommunikointiympäristön muutoksen suurin eroavaisuus oletettiin olevan luokkahuonekontekstin sekä opettaja-oppilas-suhteen puuttuminen. Näiden vaikutus kommunikointiahdistukseen on suuri, kuten esimerkiksi Hashemi (2011) tutkimuksessaan vahvisti. Karttuneen iän vaikutus koettuun kommunikointiahdistukseen oletettiin olevan positiivinen, sillä tätä olettamaa tuki usea teoreettisessa viitekehyksessä esitelty tutkimus (Hismanoglu 2012, Elmenfi 2016 ja Dewaele, Petrides ja Furnham 2008).

Tutkimus perustuu teoreettisen viitekehysten lisäksi empiiriseen tutkimusosioon. Tutkimus toteutettiin sekä määrällisenä että laadullisena tutkimuksena. Määrällisen tutkimuksen materiaali kerättiin anonyymisti kyselylomakkeella, joka laadittiin McCroskeyn luoman PRCA-24 -työkalun pohjalta (*Personal Report of Communication Apprehension*). Työkalun 24 kohtaa jakaantuvat selkeästi neljään erilaiseen kommunikointitilanteeseen, joista jokainen koostuu kuudesta väittämästä. Väittämiin vastataan Likert-skaalan tapaan valitsemalla viidestä vaihtoehdosta vaihtoehtojen ”Vahvasti samaa mieltä” ja ”Vahvasti eri mieltä” väliltä. PRCA-24 on laajasti maailmalla käytetty itsearviointilomake, jonka koetaan olevan luotettava työkalu kommunikaatioahdistuksen mittaukseen (McCroskey 1970, 271–272). Luotettavuutensa lisäksi PRCA-24 -työkalu valikoitui kyselylomakkeen pohjaksi, sillä se tarjoaa valmiin pistelaskukaavan, jonka perusteella määritetään kommunikointiahdistuksen tasot. Kyselylomake piti sisällään myös koehenkilöiden taustatietoja koskevia kysymyksiä, joilla kerättiin tietoa koehenkilöiden työhistoriasta,

englannin käytön frekvenssistä, koulutustaustasta ja sukupuolesta. Kyselyyn vastasi 56 koehenkilöä, joista 41 (73 %) oli naisia ja 15 miehiä (27 %). 31 vastaajaa kertoi valmistuneensa yliopistosta (55 %) ja 25 ammattikorkeakoulusta (45 %). Suurin osa vastaajista (63 %) oli työskennellyt täysipäiväisesti viisi vuotta tai vähemmän valmistumisensa jälkeen. 32 % vastaajista raportoi puhuvansa englantia töissä päivittäin ja yhteensä 68 % vastaajista raportoi puhuvansa englantia töissä ainakin kerran viikossa tai enemmän.

Tutkimuksen määrällisen osion aineistona käytettiin kaikkien 56:n koehenkilön vastaukset. Määrällinen tutkimus toteutettiin SPSS-analyysina ja kaikki neljä tutkimusolettamaa testattiin. Määrällisen tutkimuksen lopputulemat eivät olleet yksikään tilastollisesti merkittäviä johtuen suurilta osin otannan pienuudesta. Tilastollisten merkittävyyksien puuttumisesta huolimatta useita mielenkiintoisia tuloksia nousi esiin. Yleisesti koehenkilöiden raportoima kommunikointiahdistus oli keskiarvollisesti keskitasoa, ja hajonta oli pientä. PRCA-24 -työkalun normien määrittelyä varten testattu 40 000 yhdysvaltalaisen opiskelijan otanta raportoi keskiarvollisesti 8,1 pisteyksikköä korkeamman kommunikointiahdistuksen tason. Tästä voitiin vetää johtopäätös, että vaikka tämän tutkimuksen otanta on pieni eikä yleistyksiä voida tehdä, kokevat suomalaiset nuoret korkeakouluetut vähemmän ahdistusta kommunikoinnista kuin yhdysvaltalaiset opiskelijat. Työvuosien määrän vaikutus raportoituun ahdistustasoon testattiin vertaamalla keskiarvoja sekä suorittamalla Kruskal-Wallis testin varianssianalyysi ja Spearmanin korrelaatioanalyysi. Vaikka tilastollista merkittävyyttä ei löytynyt, Spearmanin testin negatiivinen -0,215 korrelaatioarvo implikoi, että mitä useamman vuoden työskentelee, sitä alhaisemmat ahdistustasot ovat.

Englannin kielen puhumisen frekvenssin vaikutus kommunikointiahdistuksen tasoihin testattiin keskiarvovertailulla sekä Mann-Whitneyn U-testillä, jolla testattiin ryhmien välisten erojen tilastollista merkittävyyttä, kun verrannaisryhminä käytettiin päivittäin englantia töissä puhuvien arvoja sekä sitä harvemmin englantia puhuvien arvoja. Mann-Whitneyn U-testin lopputulema oli tilastollisesti merkittävä arvo 0,007, joka tarkoittaa, että englantia päivittäin töissä puhuvat kokevat tilastollisesti vähemmän kommunikointiahdistusta kuin englantia sitä harvemmin töissä puhuvat. Koulutustaustan vaikutusta ahdistustasoihin testattiin niin ikään keskiarvojen vertailulla sekä Mann-Whitneyn U-testillä. Mann-Whitneyn U-testin tulos oli 0,161, joka ei ole

tilastollisesti merkittävä, mutta keskiarvojen vertailu johti tutkimushypoteesin kumoamiseen. Aiemman kandidaattityöni perusteella olettamus oli, että yliopistosta valmistuneet kokevat vähemmän kommunikointiahdistusta kuin ammattikorkeakoulusta valmistuneet. Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset kuitenkin riitelevät olettaman kanssa, sillä ammattikorkeakoulusta valmistuneet raportoivat alhaisempia ahdistustasoja kuin yliopistosta valmistuneet. Koulutustaustaa testattiin myös suorittamalla Mann-Whitneyn U-testi naisvastaajajoukon sisäisesti. Testin tulos 0,057, joka lähestyy tilastollista merkittävyyttä implikoi, että varsinkin naisvastaajien kesken koulutustaustalla saattaa olla vaikutusta koettuun kommunikointiahdistukseen. Sukupuolen vaikutusta kommunikointiahdistukseen tarkasteltiin kommunikaatiotilanteisiin jaoteltuna. Sukupuolten välisiä eroja tutkittiin vertailemalla keskiarvoja. Mielenkiintoisin tulos löytyi itse kommunikaatiotilanteiden väliltä, sillä julkista puhumista ja esiintymistä vaativat tilanteet, kuten puheiden tai esitelmien pitäminen, aiheuttivat vahvempia ahdistuksen tunteita, kuin muut kommunikointitilanteet.

Laadullinen tutkimus toteutettiin haastattelukysymysten perusteella, jotka lähetettiin kahdelletoista määrälliseen tutkimukseen osallistuneelle koehenkilölle. Koehenkilöt olivat luovuttaneet yhteystietonsa osallistuessaan määrälliseen tutkimukseen. Laadullisen tutkimusosion päämäärä oli tarkastella lähemmin työvuosien vaikutusta ahdistustasoihin. Kaikkia vastaajia pyydettiin vastaamaan omin sanoin seitsemään kysymyksen, ja kolmelle henkilölle lähetettiin lisäkysymys kyselylomakkeesta esiin tulleiden poikkeamien perusteella. Kysymyksissä tiedusteltiin vastaajien ikää, työnimikettä, pyydettiin kuvailemaan tilanteita, joissa heiltä vaaditaan töissä kommunikointia englanniksi ja minkälaisista kommunikaatiotilanteista he itse pitävät. Lisäksi heitä pyydettiin kuvailemaan, onko heidän kielellinen itseluottamuksensa kasvanut valmistumisen jälkeen ja jos näin on, niin miksi sekä vertailemaan kommunikaatiokonteksteja luokahuoneympäristön ja työn vaatimien kommunikaatiotilanteiden välillä. Kaksi vastaajaa raportoi huomattavasti korkeampia esiintymistilanteiden ahdistustasoja ja näille vastaajille lähetettiin lisäkysymys koskien julkisen puhumisen tilanteita, sekä pyydettiin pohtimaan mistä jännitys tällaisissa tilanteissa johtuu. Yhtä vastaajaa pyydettiin tarkentamaan vastaustaan, jossa hän kertoi jännityksen ja ahdistuksen tunteiden riippuvan yleisöstä. Tämän osion vastaukset jaoteltiin kahteen ryhmään. Taustakysymykset toiseen ja itsetunnon

kehitystä koskevat kysymykset toiseen. Laadullisen tutkimuksen tulokset sekä tukivat tutkimusosoittamia, että riitelivät niiden kanssa. Useampi vastaaja totesi sekä iän, että kommunikointiympäristön vaihdoksen luokahuoneesta työpaikalle tehneen heistä itsevarmempia englannin puhujia. Kaksi vastaajaa painottivat, että ammatillisen kompetenssin kasvu valmistumisen jälkeen on nimenomainen syy kielellisen itseluottamuksen kasvuun. Kaksi vastaajaa mainitsi kommunikoinnin äidinkielenään englantia puhuvien ihmisten kanssa syyksi vahvistuneeseen kielelliseen itseluottamukseen.

Tässä tutkimuksessa on useita rajoitteita, jotka kyseenalaistavat tulosten paikkaansa pitävyyden. Ensinnäkin koehenkilöiden määrä sekä vastausten keräysnopeus luo haasteita yleistykselle. Koehenkilöotanta oli pieni määrällisen tutkimuksen valossa ja kaikki vastaukset kyselylomakkeeseen vastaanotettiin kahden vuorokauden sisällä sekä keskimääräinen vastausaika oli muutamia minuutteja, joten vastaajien sitoutuminen kyselyyn on kyseenalaistettavissa. Toiseksi, kuten tämän tiivistelmän alussa kuvailtiin, nähdään sekä kommunikointiahdistus että vieraan kielen puhumisen tuottama ahdistus samanarvoisina termeinä. Tämä on selitetty sillä, että koehenkilöjä on alusta asti muistutettu vastaamaan kyselyyn pitäen mielessä englannin kielisen kommunikointitilanteet. Kolmanneksi, teoreettisessa viitekehyksessä ei ole pystytty tuomaan esiin ammatillisen kompetenssin sekä vieraan kielen puhumisen tuottaman ahdistuksen ja kommunikointiahdistuksen väliseen suhteeseen keskittyneitä tutkimuksia. Tämä johtuu siitä, että aihepiiriin liittyvä aiempi tutkimus kohdistuu vahvasti luokahuoneympäristöön sekä opiskelijoihin.

Tämä tutkimus on tietääkseni ainoa laatuaan, joka tutkii vieraan kielen tuottaman ahdistuksen ja ammatillisen kompetenssin välistä suhdetta. Vaikka koehenkilöryhmä oli liian pieni yleistysten tekoon, tuo tämä tutkimus esiin paljon mahdollisuuksia tulevaisuuden tutkimuksille. Tämä tutkimus, kuten edeltäjänsä, vahvistaa entisestään ajatusta opettajasta ja luokahuoneympäristöstä kielellisen kompetenssin ja itseluottamuksen luojina, joka kantaa pitkälle tulevaisuuteen.