Let’s talk about Public Speaking Anxiety: Supporting and scaffolding sustainable speaking practices while at university and beyond

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Recognising and experiencing Public Speaking Anxiety in a university oral communication unit

Abstract

Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) is an enduring challenge in education and employment. Speaking in front of others can evoke varying levels of unease, from mild to severe feelings of anxiety. Such anxiety can impact confidence and skill in public speaking, a skill that is an increasingly sought-after employment capability. Over the last 50 years, there has been extensive research interest in the area of Communication Apprehension (CA) in general, and PSA in particular. However, much of this research originates from North American universities and applies a quantitative approach to gathering information about causes, manifestations and treatments of PSA. Although these studies provide initial pedagogical considerations, more in-depth exploration of this phenomenon in relation to matters of learning and teaching is needed.

This professional doctorate investigated PSA in higher education via two connected projects. Project 1 utilised an instrumental case study to explore how PSA is recognised and experienced in an undergraduate oral communication unit at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Drawing on critical reflective practice, this study identified PSA as complex, prevalent, individual and unstable. In order to better manage such a multi-faceted phenomenon in an educational setting, eight guiding principles evolved from this research. These include: (1) creating safe and supportive learning spaces, (2) recognising individual differences, (3) providing planned and ongoing speaking opportunities, (4) unpacking instructional material, (5) promoting interaction and discussion, (6) reducing uncertainty, (7) offering regular and constructive feedback and (8) working within policy considerations. In addition, the importance of building self-efficacy beliefs was highlighted as a way to develop sustainable speaking practices. This research strengthens understanding of PSA in the context of higher education and informs the creation of a new framework of support that has application at the broader university level. The latter is the focus of Project 2.

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Definition of key terms

BAS	Behavioural Activation System
BIS	Behavioural Inhibition System
CA	Communication Apprehension
CIF	Creative Industries Faculty
COM	Communication-Orientation Modification
CRA	Criterion-Referenced Assessment
DCI	Doctor of Creative Industries
FFF	Fight, Flight, Freeze
PRPSA	Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety
PSA	Public Speaking Anxiety
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SD	Systematic Desensitisation
SRL	Self-Regulated Learning
STAI	State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

Statement of original authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: QUT Verified Signature

Date: 29 May, 2020

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This work is dedicated to my daughters, Lydia and Emma.

You are never far away as you live within my heart.

Project background

Introduction

Scholarship surrounding Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) is immense. It offers a deep and rich understanding of a phenomenon that affects many people as they go about their personal and professional lives. The extant literature includes numerous examples of quantitative studies undertaken in North American universities. Depending on the focus of investigation, planned experiments have used speaker surveys, body monitoring (for example, heart rates) or behavioural indicators (through trained observers) in an effort to understand how PSA manifests or can be alleviated (Beatty, Heisel, Lewis, Pence, Reinhart & Tian, 2011; Finn, Sawyer & Schrodt, 2009a; Harris, Sawyer & Behnke, 2006; Hunter, Westwick & Haleta, 2014). These studies frequently result in the production of descriptive statistics but tend to offer limited pedagogical advice. Not surprisingly, different studies have produced different instructional suggestions. Although such quantitative designs have opened up a variety of possible ways of dealing with PSA, the sheer volume of research presents challenges for educators. What is missing is a more practical understanding of PSA in an educational setting. This includes how, and if, one semester of study can assist in addressing this phenomenon and developing longer-term PSA management strategies.

The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) offers a dedicated oral communication unit. *Strategic Speech Communication* is a core unit in the Bachelor of Media and Communication and the Bachelor of Mass Communication within the Creative Industries Faculty (CIF). It is also available as an elective for students studying other CIF courses (for example, journalism, entertainment, acting) as well as from other QUT faculties (including business, psychology and law). *Strategic Speech Communication* focuses on creating and analysing oral messages. Over a 13-week semester, there are numerous opportunities for

students to speak in front of peers and receive feedback. A stated aim in the unit outline is for students to develop a sense of self-awareness that allows for self-critique and continued growth (QUT, 2017a). For this to occur, PSA must be recognised as a pervasive phenomenon that can affect students in different ways and at different times throughout a semester. A commitment to reducing PSA reflects a general instructional approach to speech communication units (Bodie, 2010). Recognition of 'continued growth' is also seen to develop effective speaking habits that can travel with students once the unit of study has finished. This research is set in the real-world experience of my teaching within *Strategic Speech Communication* and addresses my professional interest in how universities can support students to develop competent and confident speaking practices. I pursued this interest through the QUT Doctor of Creative Industries (DCI) program.

The DCI program offers a unique doctoral level qualification. DCI candidates must "develop an ongoing critical dialogue between [their] research and professional practice" (QUT, n.d., para 3). To encourage a rich and robust approach to reflection, candidates complete two separate but interconnected projects. As an experienced practitioner, this program offered me an opportunity to make a practical contribution to my field. Taking into account the extant literature, Project 1 utilised a case study research design to explore how PSA is recognised and experienced in a first-year, university oral communication unit. Project 2 considered how support structures could be renewed or enhanced. It is envisaged that a more extended framework of support could have wider implications beyond any one unit of study.

Getting to know the researcher

I began my career as a teacher. Some serendipitous moments enabled me to take on a variety of roles in primary and secondary schools where my area of specialty was speech and drama. After seven years as a classroom teacher, I decided to study journalism and worked at a

Brisbane radio station as a newsreader. Following that, I spent a number of years as an information officer within the Queensland Department of Education. In this role my tasks included organising events, writing speeches and coordinating media training programs. At the same time, I continued to study speech, gaining my Associate in Speech and Drama, Australia (ASDA) through the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB). An opportunity to take on a tutoring role at QUT in 2004 resulted in a new chapter. Initially, I took two tutorials in *Strategic Speech Communication*. I have been involved in this unit ever since and in 2011 took on the role of Unit Coordinator. As this has always been in a part-time capacity (usually 60 per cent of a full-time load), I have continued to offer oral communication workshops for students and business professionals in the public and private sector. The spoken word has always fascinated me and any career moves have involved speaking in both face-to-face and mediated contexts. In addition, I have met many people who are keen to enhance their oral communication skills. I situate my work within education and training. In most instances, I work with people who have elected to be part of a class, workshop or training session.

I subscribe to a social constructivist approach to learning and teaching (Vygotsky, 1978). This fits with my worldview that much of our lived experience is derived from socially constructed versions of reality and that there are different ways of making sense of our world. Social constructivism posits that students build on previous experiences and create knowledge by being part of learning communities (Hanson & Sinclair, 2008). The role of learner is paramount. The role of teacher is to assist in providing opportunities for such meaning-making. This approach is essential for the promotion of life-long learning and extends beyond issues of content to look at a broad suite of transferable skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication. In the classroom, it means acknowledging that students come with their own attitudes, beliefs, expectations and experiences.

Significance of this study

As a speech communication teacher, I encounter PSA on a regular basis in my classroom. However, it is an insidious phenomenon that can present in diverse ways and levels of intensity. Over the years, I have noted that my general impression of a student's ability to speak in front of others does not always match how they are feeling. For example, some students may look and sound confident but later confess to extreme physical responses such as feeling nauseous before attending a class presentation. In addition, a student who appears uninterested in a speaking task may admit to feeling a lack of control over the situation. Collectively, these conversations led me on the path of my DCI. My initial idea was to create an extended framework of support for student speakers. However, I first needed to understand current thinking and experiences surrounding PSA. For this reason, I undertook a qualitative instrumental case study where the phenomenon under study was PSA and the bounded system was an undergraduate university oral communication unit at QUT. This type of case study allows for multiple data collection points as well as an interpretive and emergent approach to understanding the phenomenon. This study also provided an opportunity to become immersed in the extant literature surrounding PSA and to actively make links between theory and practice. In keeping with this approach, this study addressed the following research questions:

> R1: What previously unexamined aspects of PSA can be understood through a case study of a university oral communication unit during one semester of study?
>
> R2: Do current learning opportunities in *Strategic Speech Communication* address this phenomenon at the unit, class and individual level?
>
> R3: Can the current delivery mode of this unit contribute to continued growth in the development of competent and confident speaking practices?

Literature review

Introduction

Extensive research in the area of communication anxiety has resulted in a diverse and robust body of knowledge that has been used to advance theory and support instruction. In relation to oral communication, such anxiety has been investigated under a number of constructs including stage fright, shyness, reticence, willingness to communicate, unwillingness to communicate and Communication Apprehension (CA) (Wadleigh, 2009). Although each construct comes with its own definition and unique focus, a common thread involves an individual's tendency to participate, or not participate, in some form of social interaction (Daly, Caughlin, & Stafford, 2009). In many educational environments, participation and interaction are essential for learning and achievement. In particular, this may mean students require the ability to contribute to discussions or present ideas to others in both formal and non-formal settings. To begin, this review highlights key considerations and ongoing developments in the literature about CA in general and PSA more specifically.

Beginning with Communication Apprehension

Initial attempts to measure communication-based anxieties were seen to be "excessively broad"[1] (Sawyer, 2016, p. 405). However, the introduction of a trait-state distinction (Spielberger, 1966) provided a more nuanced way of addressing this concern, with trait anxiety defined as more enduring or personality based, and state anxiety as more fleeting or reactive. In particular, this distinction spurred extensive research around the construct of Communication Apprehension (CA), which has been widely investigated over the past 50 years. James McCroskey (1970), a leading figure in communication scholarship, first defined

[1] A fear of speaking in front of others is not a new experience. The Roman orator Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC–43 BC) once wrote: "I turn pale at the outset of a speech and quake in every limb and in all my soul".

CA as “a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication” (p. 270). Seven years later, he extended this definition to “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). This modified definition covers a number of possible communication exchanges including one-to-one (individual), one-to-few (small group) and one-to-many (public speaking). Following on from Spielberger’s (1966) work, McCroskey and Beatty (1986) conceived CA as both “a trait-like predisposition toward[s] communication [in general] and as a state-like response to a given communication situation” (p. 280). In recognising the “powerful interaction” of both personality traits and situational constraints,[2] McCroskey (1984) conceptualised the sources of CA along a four-point continuum, (later diagrammed as Figure 1).

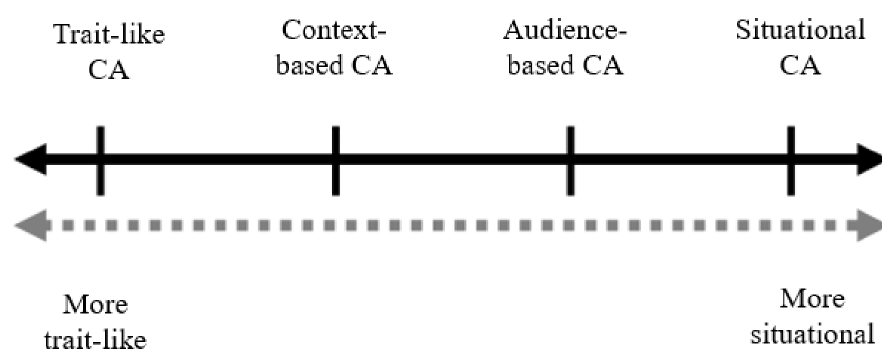

Figure 1: CA continuum (Richmond, Wrench & McCroskey, 2013, p. 34)

At one end of the continuum is trait-like CA which “is viewed as a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts”[3] (McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2009, p. 106). This definition provides clarification when looking at the remaining points on McCroskey’s scale, in particular around

[2] Although traits and states are seen to “represent different psychological constructs” (Harris et al., 2006, p. 213), some scholars have suggested caution in viewing them in isolation, referring to such an approach as a “false dichotomy” (McCroskey, 1984; McCroskey, Richmond & McCroskey, 2009).

[3] For the purposes of this review, the term ‘mode’ refers to oral communication. Research has also been conducted around trait-like CA in relation to writing and singing (McCroskey, 1984).

permanency, personality and context. The next type of apprehension along the continuum is context-based CA. Unlike trait-like CA, which is seen to affect the ability to communicate across all situations, context-based CA involves a specific communication environment. For example, some speakers may experience a particular level of anxiety when asked to speak in one of the following settings: in class or meetings, in public (as when giving a speech), in small group discussions, or when speaking with one other person (McCroskey et al., 2009). A general feeling of reluctance in any of these areas is still seen to be "a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation" (McCroskey et al., 2009, p. 107). Further along the continuum is audience-based CA which "represents the reactions of an individual to communicating with a given person or group of persons across time" (McCroskey et al., 2009). In differentiating this type of CA, McCroskey et al. (2009) suggest that some speakers experience a generalised yet ongoing anxiety about speaking in front of specific audiences. At the opposite end of trait-like CA is situational CA, which is a more state-based anxiety. This type of apprehension may be short-lived in the sense that it is time-bound and situation specific. It focuses on how a speaker responds to the constraints presented when speaking to a particular person or group of people at a particular moment in time (McCroskey et al., 2009). While trait-like CA is seen to be more persistent, the fleeting nature of situational CA makes it more complicated to analyse (Russ, 2012).

Conceiving CA in this manner has direct implications for classroom instruction. While some students may find all opportunities to speak a 'fearful' experience, including answering a question during a lecture or speaking with a tutor at the end of class, oral assessment items might trigger a particular level of apprehension in other students. Such a broad range of possible responses presents a challenge for educators in terms of how best to support individual students in managing different sources and levels of anxiety. An additional problem arises because trait and state anxiety are not always meaningfully correlated. For

example, a speaker who identifies as high trait anxious may not experience state anxiety in all situations. Alternatively, a speaker who identifies as low trait anxious may still feel nervous under certain conditions (i.e., during a job interview or major oral presentation for assessment) or simply because they are having a “bad day” (Sawyer & Behnke, 2009, p. 91). Adding to this complexity is a lack of consensus surrounding the origins of CA.

General responses to fearful situations

Biology offers one explanation of why and how individuals experience fear. This also supports an evolutionary perspective in that individuals are ‘hardwired’ in their response to danger to ensure human survival (Seligman, 1971, cited in Richmond et al., 2013). Biological explanations include how the brain processes a potential risk and whether or not this leads to a Fight, Flight or Freeze (FFF) response (Richmond et al., 2013). When confronted with a perceived threatening stimulus, the brain sends a series of chemical messages or hormones that can increase, decrease or halt certain bodily functions. A release of hormones such as adrenaline, norepinephrine and cortisol can heighten overall arousal and reactivity. As Priem and Solomon (2009) explain, this can result in a necessary surge of energy:

> During times of stress, cortisol release increases to provide additional energy to deal with the stressor. When stress is short term, the increased release of cortisol is positive because it allows individuals to cope with the threat. In particular, individuals can use the energy provided by cortisol, to either leave the stressful situation or take action to end it. Once the stressor is mitigated, cortisol levels decline and the individual recovers from the stress. (p. 262)

Such reactions are deemed essential when encountering imminent danger as they prepare the body to act decisively. However, if the perceived threat is a social encounter, such as public speaking, the release of these so-called stress hormones may instead interfere with the ability to successfully present a message. For instance, physiological changes can lead to a racing heart, shaking limbs and sweaty palms. Furthermore, the cessation of certain bodily functions, such as producing saliva in order to focus on the threat at hand, can result in a dry mouth (Richmond et al., 2013). These are all common sensations attributed to PSA and can "reduce a speaker's effectiveness and ability to concentrate or remember information" (Priem & Solomon, 2009, p. 263). In terms of instructional effort, the 'biology of fear' is a useful starting point. However, in relation to CA specifically, there is extensive and conflicting research about the causes of this phenomenon.

Causes of Communication Apprehension

The study of CA[4] has focused on three broad areas – causes, manifestations and possible treatment options. Although this presents an apparently linear approach to investigating this construct (identify the causes, acknowledge the effects and prescribe suitable treatment), resulting scholarship has not been straightforward. In early approaches, CA was believed to be a learnt behaviour (McCroskey, 1984). Therefore, if learning was the problem, then relearning was the solution. As part of this process, desired speaking attributes were identified and taught.

In the late 1990s, key communication scholars advanced a new theoretical perspective concerning the causes of CA. Drawing on psychobiology as well as personality and temperament theories, these scholars suggested biology, not learning, was the main source of

[4] CA is sometimes referred to as Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA) to highlight the oral component of this phenomenon, which McCroskey (1984) has maintained has always been the focus of his work.

communication-based anxieties (Beatty & McCroskey, 1997; Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998). In describing human behaviour, their work expanded on general biological principles to include individual characteristics. That is, they found that some people are innately more prone to be anxious than others. Beatty et al.'s (1998) theory became known as communibiology and sparked much discussion in communication circles. In particular, researchers attempted to quantify the overall impact of a person's genetic makeup in relation to environmental considerations. Although the communibiological perspective does not completely discount the role of environmental factors, this perspective suggests that genetics accounts for 80 per cent of a person's level of CA (McCroskey, 2009).

The communibiology paradigm provides one way of examining CA. A second approach is the multi-causal paradigm which points to more than one underlying influence. In particular, this paradigm suggests that both hereditary and environmental factors lead to the development of certain communication behaviours (including levels of anxiety). Condit (2000) challenged Beatty et al.'s (1997) conclusion that 80 per cent of a speaker's CA was genetically based, suggesting it was more likely to be in the vicinity of 40–60 per cent. Other researchers have also questioned a focus on genetics as the principal cause in the development of this type of apprehension. For example, Daly et al. (2009) present a four-part perspective that includes genetic disposition but also acknowledges the role of reinforcement, skill acquisition[5] and modelling. In other words, CA can also stem from earlier experiences with speaking in relation to perceived reward and punishment, from general training in the area, and from the types of role models present during an individual's formative years (Daly et al., 2009).

[5] Skill acquisition (or lack thereof) is sometimes referred to as a third potential cause of CA, in addition to environmental factors and genetic predisposition (Sawyer, 2016).

Ayres, Hsu, Schmidt, and Sonandre (2009) also suggest that a number of factors contribute to CA including nervous system strength (NSS), motivation, negative evaluation and communication competence. Ayres et al. (2009) propose that their Component Theory approach provides a more "interactionist perspective [in which] some aspects of CA are learned, some are essentially inherited, and some arise out of the overlap of the two" (p. 68). Component Theory provides a way of conceptualising CA in the classroom. In addition to an innate predisposition to react to certain stimuli (NSS), a high-perceived need to communicate (motivation), fear of negative evaluation and low perception of overall communication competence can increase CA levels. This highlights the subjective nature of the CA experience as these elements may interact differently for individual speakers.

Understanding the varying viewpoints surrounding the causes of CA is critical for educators. For example, subscribing wholly to a communibiological perspective would lead to scepticism that any 'treatment' option will make a difference. However, simply believing that internal levels of anxiety can be meaningfully reduced through external training methods is also problematic. In continuing to explore individual characteristics, more recent research has acknowledged that trait-like CA may be difficult to change but can still be addressed. As Beatty et al. (2011) state:

> Whether or not programs designed to reduce the anxiety component of CA are effective, a substantial portion of the negative impact of trait-like CA can be alleviated if students acquire communication skills and are guided to implement them regardless of internal negative states. (p. 454)

Rather than present a defeatist view (i.e., 'Sorry, you will always be anxious when speaking'), Beatty et al.'s (2011) approach provides a more realistic understanding of what

can and cannot be done in any academic unit of study. In particular, reference to 'acquiring' and 'guiding' skill development may assist students to identify and work on strategies of personal significance. This DCI research project acknowledges that individual and environmental differences provide an important foundational perspective when investigating PSA. However, in a practical setting, educators may have limited capacity to engage with the depth and breadth of the available literature.

Positioning Public Speaking Anxiety

Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) is generally seen as a sub-type of CA[6] and can be conceived as both a trait and state. PSA is most frequently defined as "a situation specific social anxiety that arises from the real or anticipated enactment of an oral presentation" (Bodie, 2010, p. 72). PSA can be differentiated from more general social anxiety by acknowledging the central role of the audience in any speaking opportunity, including the "threat of unsatisfactory evaluations from audiences" (Schlenker & Leary, 1982, p. 646). Sawyer and Behnke (2009) provide the simplest definition of this phenomenon as "the fear of confronting an audience while speaking" (p. 87). Although high levels of trait-like CA are experienced by approximately 20 per cent of the population, up to 70 per cent[7] may experience moderately high to high levels of anxiety when asked to give a speech in public (McCroskey, 2009; Richmond et al., 2013). Furthermore, Richmond et al. (2013) suggest "virtually 100 per cent" of people will experience some level of anxiety in at least one speaking situation (p. 38).

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[6] Public speaking is one of four communication contexts within the Communication Apprehension construct. The other three are interpersonal, small group and large group or meeting.

[7] This oft-quoted figure is based on studies conducted by Richmond and McCroskey (1989) with US college students utilising the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA), which is a self-report survey (McCroskey, 1970). Richmond and McCroskey's (1989) research suggests that 70 per cent of those surveyed experienced moderately high to high levels of PSA. This statistic is sometimes proffered more generally as '70 percent of people fear speaking in front of others'. In another study, Dwyer and Davidson (2012) found that "over 61 per cent of students reported a fear of speaking in front of a group" (p. 106).

For educators, these statistics can be confronting but useful. For students with high trait-like CA, the majority of communication exchanges can prove difficult. As mentioned, this may include feeling anxious when contributing to group discussions, asking questions during class or meeting with instructors for an individual consultation. It is worth noting that these are also typical opportunities offered to students in order to clarify an oral assessment task. Identifying levels of trait anxiety can be useful in determining high, medium and low levels of CA within a student population. However, as Behnke and Sawyer (2001) caution, these broad categories can mask the individual experience.

Public Speaking Anxiety has also been conceptualised in terms of physiological, psychological and behavioural responses. Initial attempts to find a stronger link between these three responses proved disappointing (Clevenger, 1959). However, it prompted the exploration of each domain in new ways, including heartbeat monitoring (physiological),[8] self-report measures (psychological)[9] and observer ratings (behavioural). The first two responses refer to internal indicators of PSA such as physical feelings (i.e., nausea, tingling, light-headedness, racing heart and dry mouth) and/or negative thoughts in relation to any speaking task. Meantime, external indicators of PSA refer to observable behaviours (i.e., speech errors and disfluencies, nervous smiling and gestures, face covering, body blocking, postural tension, rigidity, silences and word repetition) (Daly et al., 2009). In addition, extreme behavioural responses are also possible including avoidance (evading any subject that includes speaking), and withdrawal (refusing to talk or removing oneself from the class) (Mottet, Richmond & McCroskey, 2016). Significantly, more recent research has revealed

[8] Physiological stress has also been measured via brain temperature, cortisol levels and "self-report [surveys] of gastrointestinal, cardiopulmonary, disorientation and numbness body sensations" (Bodie, 2010, p. 73).

[9] For an extensive list of available self-report scales for both trait and state anxiety, refer Bodie (2010).

that although PSA can be experienced internally (via thoughts and feelings) and externally (via behaviour), these manifestations are not always synchronised (Mottet et al., 2016). For example, a speaker may appear calm from the audience's point of view but may be experiencing unhelpful thoughts or physical symptoms, such as knots in the stomach or tightening in the throat. These anomalies recognise that PSA can be experienced in different ways and levels of intensity.

A closer look at state PSA

Three interacting factors are used to gauge a state PSA response. These are (1) cognitive traits (a general susceptibility to experience anxious thoughts when asked to speak in front of others), (2) reactivity (a general propensity to become physically aroused when faced with a stressful event) and (3) situational determinants (immediate contextual elements surrounding a specific task) (Bodie, 2010). Cognitive traits and reactivity are more enduring characteristics of a speaker. As Richmond et al. (2013) state, they also represent two separate theories explaining how individuals experience communication-based anxiety. In short, PSA symptoms can stem from either excessive physiological arousal[10] or an inability to cognitively process "available information [a]ppropriately" (Richmond et al., 2013, p. 92). However, Behnke and Beatty (1981) suggest that these may not be conflicting viewpoints. With high-stakes speaking tasks, as in the case of an oral assessment piece, heart rate measures for both anxious and non-anxious speakers may become elevated, but perceived differently (Beatty & Behnke, 1991). That is, different speakers could interpret such physiological indicators as either fear or excitement (Wilcox, 2009). The third contributing factor of a state PSA response relates to situational determinants. These contextual sources

[10] Physiological arousal includes increased heart rate, palmar sweating, trembling and gastrointestinal responses (such as esophageal reactions, nausea and vomiting) (Witt, Brown, Roberts, Weisel, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2006).

are more temporary in nature and can vary from one event to the next. Buss (1980) proposed a list of variable sources: formality, subordinate status, conspicuousness, unfamiliarity, dissimilarity and degree of attention from others. This list was later extended to include degree of evaluation and prior history (McCroskey, 1984). All eight sources are regarded as common features of oral presentations for assessment.

To further investigate state PSA, Behnke and Sawyer (2001) proposed dividing a speaking task into four milestones, referred to as narrowbanding. These milestones include anticipation (one minute before the speech),[11] confrontation (first minute of the speech), adaptation (last minute of the speech) and release (the minute immediately following the speech) (Behnke & Sawyer, 2001). In addressing the subjective nature of state anxiety, speakers can experience each milestone differently. However, recent research has detected two general patterns of psychological state anxiety in relation to these four milestones, known as habituation and sensitisation (refer Figure 2). In short, habituation occurs when an initial threat is not met. For example, a speaker may anticipate the act of speaking as being a greater threat than what actually eventuates. If sensitisation occurs when commencing the speech, this can trigger more anxiety than originally thought (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004; Bodie, 2010). In terms of reducing PSA, and developing ongoing effective speaking practices, the habituation pattern is favoured as anxiety levels are seen to decrease over time (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004).

[11] The anticipation phase has been further divided into (1) announcement of the task, (2) preparation time and (3) just before delivery. For some speakers, anxiety levels elevate the moment a speaking task is announced (Witt & Behnke, 2006).

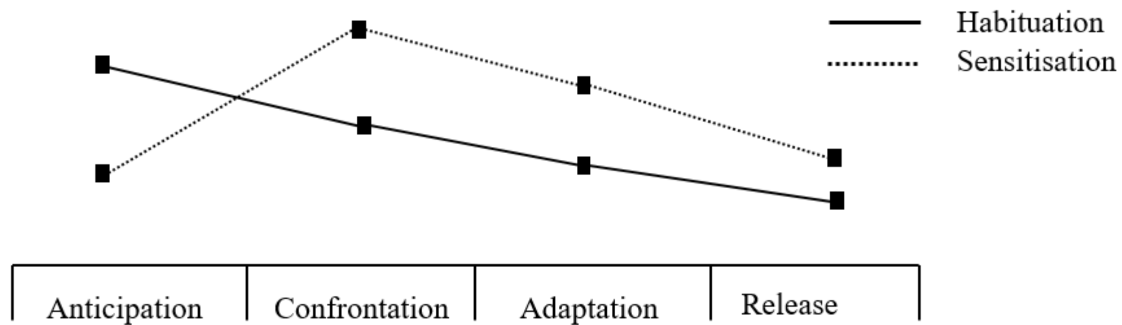

Figure 2: Pattern of habituation and sensitisation (Bodie, 2010, p. 85)

In an effort to better understand how an individual may respond to a perceived fearful event, research into communication anxiety has drawn heavily on psychological constructs. Specifically, numerous studies investigating CA and PSA refer to Gray's (1982) general theory of anxiety (cited in Sawyer, 2016). Gray proposed several emotional systems or circuits that can be activated during a potentially stressful situation. These circuits include the Behavioural Activation System (BAS), Behavioural Inhibition System (BIS), and the Fight-Flight-Freeze (FFF) system. As Finn et al. (2009a) state:

> According to this perspective, a neural circuit located in the septo-hippocampal region of the brain, called the comparator, assesses the level of threat in the immediate environment … Activation of the BAS is associated with purposeful, goal directed behavior and positive emotions such as relief and hope. However, in situations perceived as threatening, the comparator triggers the behaviour inhibition system (BIS), which suppresses motor activity while simultaneously increasing physiological arousal and defensive psychological reactions including worry and heightened levels of vigilance. (p. 94)

Overall, this theory posits that each new experience is evaluated by a neural circuit called the comparator, with the resulting appraisal triggering either the BIS or the BAS. As the BIS responds to signs of non-reward or perceived punishment, it often initiates at the beginning of a new experience. However, if early fears are not sustained, then heightened vigilance is no longer needed, resulting in BAS activation (Finn et al., 2009a). Oral presentations for assessment may be perceived as threatening because of grade requirements, limited past experience and size of audience (Sawyer, 2016). These factors also align with the aforementioned contextual sources as outlined by Buss (1980).

In support of the communibiology paradigm, some people appear to have highly sensitive BIS systems, which may explain why some speakers are more anxious than others. As Kelly and Keaten (2000) state "high CAs have inherited a low threshold for BIS activation" (p. 48) which can increase physiological arousal, psychological reactions and behavioural expressions during planned or imagined communication events. In particular, highly reactive individuals may find it more difficult to adapt to a fearful event (for example, public speaking) lessening chances of habituation (Gray & McNaughton, 2000). However, Kelly and Keaten (2000) also highlight the role that specific training or instruction can play in reframing thoughts that are originally perceived as threatening (Kelly and Keaten, 2000). In relation to this DCI research, one potential way of transferring control from the BIS to the BAS is to reduce the perception of punishment surrounding an oral speaking task (Sawyer & Behnke, 2009).

Over the years, PSA research has become more specialised in terms of what is being studied and how it is being studied. This is in contrast to earlier research attempts that failed to recognise "important conceptual distinctions" surrounding PSA (Sawyer, 2016, p. 404). When reading the literature for pedagogical input, it is imperative to acknowledge these

distinctions. For example, Roberts, Finn, Harris, Sawyer and Behnke (2005) looked at public speaking trait anxiety combined with a psychological predisposition in an effort to find out more about public speaking state anxiety. Whereas Finn et al. (2009a) chose to explore "physiological mechanisms that account for the relationship between states and traits" (p. 419). Acknowledging the overall conceptual framework of each study is especially important when using research findings to inform learning and teaching practices. Otherwise, any support mechanisms offered to lessen PSA symptoms may be too limited to cope with differing student experiences.

Management options

Perspectives on what causes CA or PSA will influence possible treatment options. Ongoing research interest in this area has led to new ways of conceiving and measuring speech anxiety. This has resulted in a number of possible methods of remediation. Although some methods, or a mix of methods, have received positive feedback in the literature, a panacea has not been found (Sawyer, 2016). The major treatment options cited in the literature are: skills training, Systematic Desensitisation (SD), visualisation and Communication-Orientation Modification (COM) therapy.

Skills training relates to a perceived deficit of speaking skills as a potential cause of PSA. Therefore, this type of training focuses on learning these required skills. Skills training can be implemented in different ways; however, the central idea is that confident and competent speaking habits can be assisted through clear instruction (Kelly & Keaten, 2000). This instruction can include how to analyse an audience, gather material, organise points, use oral language, create speaking outlines, prepare visuals and deliver a spoken message. However, what actually constitutes skills training is contested (Kelly & Keaten, 2009). For example, Glasser (1981) provides an extended list of methods including "direct instruction and

coaching of target behaviors, modelling, goal setting, covert rehearsal, behavioral rehearsal, in vivo practice, and self-monitoring" (p. 332). In looking at how North American speech departments addressed CA, Robinson (1997) found that a skills-based approach was the most common. One criticism of skills training is that it does not deal specifically with general feelings connected to speaking in front of others (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004). These feelings can override skill development. This means that, for high trait anxious speakers, their level of discomfort can impede preparation time even when helpful techniques or strategies have been provided (Ayres, 1996).

Internal feelings or thoughts connected to speaking a message are addressed as part of the other three key treatment options: SD, visualisation and COM therapy. SD is a staged approach to relaxation. The overall aim is to decrease reactivity through a range of imagined speaking situations, from less threatening to more threatening, in a graduated fashion (Lane, Cunconan, Friedrich, & Goss, 2009). Similarly, visualisation encourages speakers to imagine an upcoming speaking situation in a positive manner (Bodie, 2010). Both SD and visualisation incorporate breathing and relaxation techniques as a way of regulating levels of anxiety. In contrast, COM therapy addresses a speaker's attitude towards presenting a message. This approach encourages speakers to adopt a communication rather than performance orientation as the latter can heighten anxiety levels (Motley, 2009). How an individual thinks about speaking in general, or at a specific moment, is captured via self-report surveys[12] such as the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA)

[12] Self-report surveys gather rich and useful data for large-scale research projects. They can also be used at the beginning of a teaching semester to indicate general levels of CA or PSA. However, individual surveys are time-consuming in terms of administering and scoring. In addition, they require knowledge and skills to provide follow-up support.

(McCroskey, 1970) and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983).

More recently, exposure therapy has been proposed as an effective strategy for reducing PSA. Finn et al. (2009a) investigated how repeated exposure to the same audience in a basic public speaking course can create more positive connections to speaking in front of others, which may alleviate previous negative attitudes. These authors concluded that within-session habituation (during the one presentation) and between-session habituation (from one presentation to the next) were more likely to occur when speakers had a chance to process how they were feeling through repeated opportunities to speak in a safe and supportive environment. The benefits of repeated exposure are seen to assist anxious speakers even when a communibiological paradigm is adopted (Kelly & Keaten, 2000). For example, Kelly and Keaten (2000) suggest that BIS activation can be reduced via a sequence of speaking activities that build in intensity. Lessening reactivity can also help students to adapt and eventually habituate to speaking tasks (Harris, et al., 2006). Therefore, exposure therapy may not only reduce state anxiety but has the potential to alleviate more general feelings connected to trait anxiety and/or levels of reactivity.

The different treatment options have received mixed reviews in the literature (Hsu, 2009; Lane et al., 2009; Motley, 2009). Overall, a combination of approaches is suggested as most beneficial (Hunter et al., 2014). In fact, some researchers advocate a more personalised approach based on a combination of remediation methods. That is, a number of treatment options may be required and the ‘best order’ of remedial action is dependent on the type and cause of anxiety for each individual speaker (Dwyer, 2009). Dwyer’s (2009) Multidimensional Model offers a way of dealing with individual differences. More importantly, it provides an opportunity for speakers to understand which treatment option, or

blend of treatment options, would best serve their needs. This approach can assist students in becoming active participants in the remediation process. However, the time required to implement such programs is challenging in large units of study. For this reason, skills training and exposure therapy are favoured as they are seen to fit with existing instructional formats. In summary, it is unlikely that any one strategy or treatment option will provide a definitive answer for all students in all situations. Therefore, educators must be able to interpret research findings in light of circumstance.

Connecting to learning and teaching

The two major paradigms discussed so far, communibiology and multi-causal, offer different guidelines in terms of instructional pursuits. As with Wadleigh (2009), while acknowledging rich and thoughtful scholarship on both sides, my research supports a multi-causal approach. This does not discount genetic differences in relation to PSA. In fact, this DCI study supports the notion that many factors contribute to this phenomenon, including personality characteristics. However, in matters of learning and teaching, a broader viewpoint (that includes environmental factors) provides necessary scope in relation to supporting speakers who have elected to undertake an oral communication unit. For this reason, my research draws on key tenets from Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as a way of considering general approaches to learning and teaching. In addition, the extant CA and PSA literature provides specific suggestions concerning classroom instruction and assessment.

Social Cognitive Theory

As stated in *Causes of Communication Apprehension* initial research into CA suggested that anxiety associated with the spoken word was best explained through Social Learning Theory (SLT), later to become known as Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). In line with this approach, initial treatment options operated under the premise that if fears could be learnt, then they

could be unlearnt or relearnt (McCroskey, 2009). SCT is attributed to psychologist Albert Bandura (1925–). Initially writing under the label of SLT, Bandura highlighted the role of observational and vicarious learning opportunities as early as 1963 (Pajares, 2002). However, he later changed the name to SCT to better reflect the role that "cognitive processes" play in "human motivation, affect and action" (Bandura, 1986, p. xii). Bandura's contribution to the inception and development of this theory spans over 50 years. With such in-depth and ongoing research, his work has not only expanded but, at times, changed direction in relation to certain concepts. This is important to recognise because simply taking an idea that was proffered at one time, or to reduce his contribution to a succinct one-line summary, could severely limit the usefulness of his work. This DCI research recognises that any opportunity to speak in front of others is a personal and social experience. It is personal because it can trigger individual feelings, thoughts and behaviours, and it is social because it involves awareness of, and interaction with, a listening other (audience). A focus on individual learner characteristics within a social classroom setting is at the core of SCT and is why this theory has much to offer this study.

In relation to approaches to learning and teaching, some have labelled SCT as more "teacher managed and directed" (Gredler, 2009, p.381). This differs from a social constructivist view, which favours 'learning communities' (Hanson & Sinclair, 2008). However, this again presents a restricted view of SCT, with an emphasis on observational or vicarious learning experiences only.[13] Bandura holds that learning is an active rather than passive process and suggests that "the development of people's conceptions of academic capabilities are [in fact] a social construction" (1997, p. 242). This process of discovery relies on both personal and

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[13] Observational learning is an important concept within SCT. It is linked to learning by watching others through modelling and vicarious experiences. It also fits with the notion that people have the ability to cognitively process what they observe for present and future experiences. As important as this concept is to SCT, it is not the only consideration of this theory and should not overshadow other well-researched areas.

social factors. By necessity, a speech communication classroom is an interactive space where students speak and listen on a regular basis. An active classroom environment contributes to a proactive view of learning rather than a reactive one. In support of this approach, Bandura (2012) suggests a dynamic interaction between personal (cognitive-affective), behavioural and environmental determinants. This 'triad' is often represented as a causal model (see Figure 3) which emphasises the 'reciprocity' between the three elements (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2012). Therefore, how people interpret their behaviour can change the way they view a particular environment as well as advise them on their personal attributes (Pajares, 2002). For example, early positive experiences in a speech communication unit could override initial reservations about the unit and a student's perception of their ability to participate.

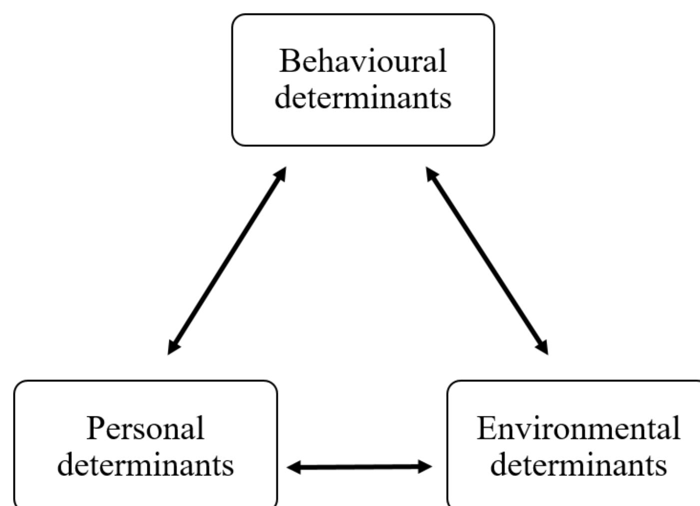

Figure 3: Triadic reciprocal causation model (Bandura, 1986)

Self-regulation and self-efficacy

Two central constructs of SCT involve self-regulation and self-efficacy. Pintrich (2000) defines self-regulation as follows:

> An active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment. (p. 453)

This again recognises the interplay between environmental factors (how a classroom is set up) and personal factors (how an individual student responds to that environment, including setting their own goals). Self-regulation is further understood through the three sub-processes of self-observation, self-judgement and self-reaction (Schunk, 1990). This extends the relevance of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) as it can occur before, during and after direct involvement in a particular task or activity (Schunk, 2008). SRL does not work in isolation. As Bandura states, this type of learning is influenced by the collective environment as it is through "socially-guided learning" that students gain new tools and insights in managing varied life experiences (1989, p. 13). SCT in general also recognises the importance of past practices and how students draw on their previous experiences as well as the experience and expertise of others in coming to new understandings (Bandura, 1989). This extends the concept of agency to include personal, proxy and collective. That is, agency may include relying on one's direct engagement, requesting the assistance of others to bring about a preferred outcome or involving others in a more socially coordinated manner (Bandura, 2001).

SCT offers valuable insight into PSA through the much-researched concept of self-efficacy. This is because self-efficacy has more to do with a student's belief about their capability to perform a required task than their outward display of ability (Bandura, 1986). Performance in this context is not reduced to merely acting out a rehearsed action. As Ritchie (2016) highlights, academic work can be considered a 'performance' in that deciding on a plan of

action has the potential to increase confidence. Therefore, this includes the preparation stage of any oral presentation as well as the actual delivery. Ritchie (2016) suggests that "there are elements of performance that transfer across learning contexts, and build on becoming a self-believing, autonomous learner" (p. 6). However, Bandura also states that self-efficacy beliefs are domain-specific. This fits with ongoing pedagogical concerns about how readily 'transferable skills' can, in fact, transfer. In this study, this means considering the potential for 'continued growth' in developing competent and confident speaking practices once the unit of study has finished. Furthermore, Bandura (1986) posits that self-efficacy beliefs[14] influence a student's involvement and perseverance with specific tasks. This can mean choosing certain environments to participate in or, if choice is not an option, personally constructing a way to engage in, or with, a particular environment. This can also relate to past experiences and the idea that repeated failures with a particular activity can weaken personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

In later work, Bandura stressed the importance of human agency and the idea that people actively contribute to their life experiences through the ability to be self-organising, self-regulating and self-reflecting (Bandura, 2005). A focus on personal agency allows for self-development and an ability to adjust to new and changing situations (Bandura, 2001). The fundamental role of self-reflection is something that Bandura (1986) states is a distinctively human ability as it connects experience, behaviour and thought. Ritchie (2016) stipulates the importance of building capability about ability – that is, securing belief in what can still be learnt. She states that a self-efficacious person is more likely to accept and cope with ongoing challenges if they are able to "continuously make and refine judgements about their ability in

[14] Schunk (1991) notes that self-efficacy is one influence on behaviour. He also acknowledges skills, outcome expectations and perceived value of outcomes.

reference to personal progress and accomplishment" (Ritchie, 2016, p. 32). The impetus here is relying on internal rather than external mechanisms for making such judgements.

As part of SCT, there are four ways that people learn and, in turn, build their self-efficacy beliefs: (1) mastery experiences, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) verbal persuasion and (4) physiological states. In other words, self-efficacy is built by learning from actually doing, learning from watching others, learning from others' judgements or feedback, and learning from internal emotional states (such as anxiety) (Pajares, Prestin, Chen, & Nabi, 2009). These four sources do not guarantee learning will take place, or that self-efficacy beliefs will be changed; rather, any information must be 'cognitively appraised' (Bandura, 1986). As Schunk (1989) states, this is a conscious act on behalf of the learner:

> Persons weigh and combine the contributions of such person and situational factors as perceived ability, task difficulty, amount of effort expended, amount of external assistance received, task outcomes, patterns of successes and failures, perceived similarity to models and persuader credibility. (p. 175)

Self-efficacy beliefs differ between individuals. One way of understanding this in an academic context is to view these beliefs through a past, present and future frame. As Schunk (1991) suggests:

> At the start of an activity, students differ in their beliefs about their capabilities to acquire knowledge, perform skills, master the material and so forth. Initial self-efficacy varies as a function of aptitude (e.g., abilities and attitudes) and prior experience. Such personal factors as goal setting and information processing, along with situational factors (e.g., rewards and teacher feedback), affect students while

> they are working. From these factors students derive cues signaling how well they are learning, which they use to assess efficacy for further learning. (p. 209)

Overall, SCT provides a way of thinking about PSA from both an individual and social perspective. In addition, it offers the key constructs of self-regulation and self-efficacy as ways of contributing to life-long learning. Specifically, it looks at how personal experiences, learning from others, feedback mechanisms and physical sensations affect classroom practices.

Application in the classroom

The personal and professional benefits of being able to confidently speak a message is a recurring theme in the literature. Oral communication or public speaking units are seen to benefit students in developing confident speaking habits (Duff, Levine, Beatty, Woolbright, & Sun Park, 2007; Hunter et al., 2014; Robinson, 1997). As public speaking is recognised as a fear-inducing activity for many, a central aim of such classes is to reduce negative feelings, thoughts and behaviours associated with PSA (Bodie, 2010). Those charged with coordinating such units have a responsibility to investigate current understandings when planning for positive classroom experiences. As Pelias (1989) states, this means going beyond "folk wisdom" and turning instead to scholarship (pp. 50–51). A major challenge with this approach is the enormity of scholarship available and the proclivity for large-scale experiments that result in statistical outputs. The practical application of such findings requires careful consideration. For example, suggestions that highly anxious speakers need more feedback or support may be pedagogically sound but practically impossible.

In looking at how speech communication classes manage speaking anxiety across a semester of study, Robinson (1997) identified a number of general approaches outside of stated

treatment options. He suggested that the following tactics were more to do with establishing a positive classroom environment than teaching a specific skill:

> Identifying students' fears as normal, encouraging practice of speeches, establishing a warm climate in the class, selecting familiar topics, making the evaluations of speeches a positive experience, becoming audience centered, and encouraging class participation. (p. 195)

All seven tactics have merit, but they also require careful planning and adequate time to be successful. As mentioned, the speech communication classroom is usually an interactive environment where students are encouraged to practise speaking in front of peers. In recognising that such activities can trigger different feelings of anxiety, every effort must be made to create a positive, inclusive and flexible classroom environment that caters for diverse needs.[15] This approach also challenges general instructional advice concerning PSA. For example, speakers are often informed that some nerves are necessary for an effective presentation. Although heightened vigilance and increased energy may prompt some speakers to do the best they can during the preparation and delivery stages; for others, excessive stress can obstruct the whole speaking process (Priem & Solomon, 2009).

Matters of assessment play a pivotal role in higher education. Universities have strict policies surrounding evaluation procedures, including the importance of aligning assessment tasks with stated unit outcomes. In particular, feedback mechanisms should identify how a student's personal achievement compares to a stated unit goal as well as "ways to bridge the gap" (Sadler, 2010, p. 536). Feedback is not just connected to assessment. In a speech

[15] This approach aligns with a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework that recognises individual learners can differ in knowledge, skills and motivation (Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012).

communication class, providing constructive feedback can reframe an in-class speaking activity as a learning opportunity rather than a perceived threat (Kelly & Keaten, 2000). Individual differences play a major role in how students interpret feedback. In ‘bridging the gap’ between unit expectations and individual achievement, Smith and King (2004) considered the concept of feedback sensitivity. Their research concluded that, for students high in feedback sensitivity, “more feedback, stronger language [and] blunt criticism” can “invoke negative attributions and defensive behaviors” (p. 214). This is further complicated because, as with speech anxiety in general, it may not be externally obvious how a student might internally react to a specific comment.

Another point of interest is that for some speakers, anxiety levels go up at the end of a speech. Providing instant feedback for these speakers may be less beneficial for two reasons. First, students may be unable to process comments because of heightened levels of anxiety. Second, regardless of intent, students may interpret any feedback in a negative light. This presents a challenge for educators in deciding whether a student needs immediate feedback to avoid dwelling on negative personal thoughts concerning the presentation, or whether delayed feedback (in the form of written comments at a later stage) could be less intimidating.

Both the communibiology paradigm and multi-causal paradigm have influenced learning and teaching practices. For example, some researchers aligned to communibiology have suggested that, outside of public speaking classes, students should not be required to give oral presentations in classrooms (Mottet, et al., 2016). In justifying this stance, these authors believe that “students should be evaluated on what they learn in the subject matter of the class for which they are enrolled, and not penalised because of their ineptness or reluctance in oral presentations” (Mottet et al., 2016, p. 64). To clarify, Mottet et al. (2016) are not confining

their comments to more formal oral presentations for assessment, but include “randomly calling on students for in-class responses” as well as “reduc[ing] the demands for oral participation” in general (p. 64). Initially, this may seem problematic, especially in relation to the number of times oral communication is mentioned on lists of graduate capabilities. However, their stance could also be interpreted in light of the following two questions:

1. Is the development of communication skills an intended outcome of the unit or subject and if yes, how is it supported?

2. Are individual communication differences (and levels of anxiety) recognised so that students have every opportunity to succeed in communication-related tasks?

For oral communication units, it is assumed that such skills would be an intentional learning outcome. But even in these units, it is worth considering how students are supported.

Conclusion

As the literature review demonstrates, research surrounding PSA is immense and diverse. In relation to university oral communication units, two themes are evident. First, the complexity of PSA must be recognised in relation to causes, manifestations and treatment options. Second, regardless of which paradigm is adopted, there is perceived merit in providing some type of instruction and/or intervention. However, this is only half of the issue. Sustainable speaking habits require maintenance. This means considering how classroom experiences can promote the ongoing development of speaking skills as well as exploring how students can build a sense of personal agency surrounding their ability to manage PSA both now and into the future.

Research design

Introduction

This research draws on an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm which is aligned with a qualitative approach to research. A strength of qualitative research is that it does not prescribe one “methodological practice” or “set of methods” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) but rather promotes a research design that supports the overall goals of the individual study. In addressing the goals of this proposed research, I have considered Creswell’s (2003) three fundamental questions around knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry and methods of data collection. In particular, this study acknowledges a socially constructed reality (Mertens, 2005) where different perspectives are not only recognised but actively sought, as indicated by Creswell (2003):

> Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective … qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also make an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researchers’ own experiences and backgrounds. (p. 9)

The overall aim of this research was to explore how PSA is recognised and experienced in a university oral communication unit in order to address the three research questions. For this reason, an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) was utilised to investigate this phenomenon in an educational setting. To begin, existing documents were analysed to consider current learning and teaching practices and supporting pedagogical resources in this unit. In addition, student evaluations and comments were examined as a way of incorporating the student voice. Finally, the primary data source was a reflective journal that I maintained to document

instances of PSA across one semester of study, providing a platform for critical reflection and improved responses to support student learning.

Case study research

According to Glesne (2011), case study research is “an intensive study of an individual, institution, organization, or some bounded group, place or process over time” (p. 279). This broad understanding has seen case studies used to further research interests in a variety of disciplines, including psychology, history, education and medicine (Starman, 2013). Although this approach to research is well recognised and utilised, it remains contested, especially around key guiding principles related to philosophical, methodological and epistemological differences (Simons, 2009). Three key case study researchers are Robert Yin (1941–), Robert Stake (1927–) and Sharan Merriam (1943–). In comparing the approaches of these academics, Yazan (2015) suggests that Yin’s work is in keeping with a more positivistic or scientific research tradition, whereas Stake’s and Merriam’s work is more aligned with a constructivist viewpoint. While acknowledging differing paradigmatic stances, Simons (2009) provides some shared understanding around case study research in general: “What they have in common is a commitment to studying a situation or phenomenon in its ‘real life’ context, to understanding complexity, and to defining case study other than by methods (qualitative or otherwise)” (p. 20). PSA is indeed a complex phenomenon and the unit *Strategic Speech Communication* provided a suitable ‘real life’ educational context for exploration. Therefore, the use of case study research was seen to be fit for the purpose of this project.

My approach to this study fits more naturally with the work of Stake and Merriam. As Stake (1995) asserts, “most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered” (p. 99). In addition, Stake (2003) suggests that “case

study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 134). Therefore, Stake (1995) avoids a restrictive definition of case study. Instead, he challenges the researcher to consider the uniqueness of the case and the issues to be explored. These questions are vital when considering the type of case study to be used. Stake (1995) makes the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental case studies. The former sees the "case as dominant … of highest importance" whereas the latter places the case as secondary in order to explore a particular issue or phenomenon (p. 16). Although *Strategic Speech Communication* provided necessary context, the phenomenon of PSA was the focus of this research, hence the decision to use an instrumental case study design.

Both Stake and Merriam have guided the conceptualisation of this research. Merriam (2009) suggests that qualitative case study research can be regarded as particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. Particularistic equates to a 'bounded system' that may be a "situation, event, program or phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Descriptive refers to what can result from an in-depth case study in terms of "thick descriptions" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43) which can become part of the final report. Finally, heuristic relates to discovery and how case study research can reinforce or challenge a reader's previously held convictions or understandings. In other words, both researcher and reader contribute to the meaning-making process (Stake, 1995). This research focused on one semester of study at QUT; however, my ongoing involvement in the unit extends my interaction with the case. Furthermore, as PSA does not only affect students enrolled in a university oral communication unit, this case study has the potential to reinforce or challenge previously held beliefs about this phenomenon in a range of contexts. This again points to the importance of including rich or thick descriptions in the final case study report that can assist readers to "vicariously experience" the case (Simons, 2009, p. 23) and consider the implications of the study's findings within their own educational contexts.

Data gathering

This study originated from a place of curiosity and a basic question: How is PSA recognised and experienced in a university oral communication unit? Acknowledging the complexity of teaching in higher education, the research interest has been extended to take into account individual, group and institutional considerations. Therefore, as Merriam (2009) states, while research topics can begin with a personal puzzle, they can expand to include social and political issues as well. This teasing out of the problem ultimately leads to research questions that "explain specifically what your study will attempt to learn or understand" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 67). Consequently, data collection methods have been chosen to 'learn or understand' something new about the phenomenon of PSA.

Case study research supports a range of data collection methods, bringing together "naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic methods" (Stake, 1995, pp. xi–xii). In particular, three recognised ways of gathering data are observation, document analysis and interviews (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 2009). These methods can help to collect rich data and fit with Stake's (1995) explanation that case studies are holistic, empirical, interpretive and emphatic. In short, a holistic approach considers how the phenomenon interacts with a particular context, empirical underpins the importance of field observations and experiences, interpretive looks at the role of researcher/subject interaction, and emphatic reflects the emic[16] experiences of participants. However, while Stake (1995) suggests that case study research can involve a "palette of methods" (pp. xi–xii), he asserts that the actual choice of methods is determined by the individual case and the purpose of inquiry. Therefore, I have intentionally selected the methods of data collection to reflect the demands of this case. To begin, the collection and analysis of relevant unit documents and

[16] According to Stake (1995), "etic issues [are] brought in by the researcher from the outside" whereas "emic issues emerge. These are the issues of the actors, the people who belong to the case" (p. 20).

student evaluations informed the scope and focus of the study. Following this, the main source of data was a reflective journal that was analysed using critical reflective practice. These are detailed in the next two sections.

Unit documents and evaluation

Unit documents and student evaluations formed part of the data collected and analysed for this study. Documents included the unit outline,[17] tutor guide and lecture slides. In addition, student feedback ratings and comments were also examined. There are two student surveys each semester: a *pulse survey* released early in the semester to gauge initial engagement with the unit, and an *insight survey*[18] that captures overall satisfaction with the unit at the end of semester, including whether or not the unit met student expectations. In addition to filling in a five-point rating scale across three specific questions, students are also invited to write an extended comment. Drawing together available data provided an efficient and effective way of building my understanding of the 'bounded system' (Stake, 1995) of this study, which was *Strategic Speech Communication*.

Reflective journal

Critical reflective practice is widely recognised within educational circles as a way of exploring both theoretical and personal expectations and experiences in relation to learning and teaching. It places the researcher within the research and encourages careful consideration of how the 'self' is part of the way data are collected and analysed, supporting the interpretive nature of qualitative research. As with observational research, reflective practice can result in a structured writing approach. Although there are numerous models to guide this process, this study utilises Bain, Ballantyne, Packer and Mills' (1999) 5-R scale of

[17] Refer Appendix A for learning goals (as part of the *Strategic Speech Communication* unit outline).

[18] Refer Appendix B for a summary of Insight survey results from Semester 1, 2013 to Semester 1, 2017.

reflection, modified to 4-Rs by Ryan and Ryan (2013). These four levels, along with accompanying prompt questions, are outlined in Table 1.

Level	Questions to get started
Reporting and Responding	Report what happened or what the issue or incident involved. Why is it relevant? Respond to the incident or issue by making observations, expressing your opinion, or asking questions.
Relating	Relate or make a connection between the incident or issue and your own skills, professional experience or discipline knowledge. Have I seen this before? Were the conditions the same or different? Do I have the skills and knowledge to deal with this? Explain.
Reasoning	Highlight in detail significant factors underlying the incident or issues. Explain and show why they are important to an understanding of the incident or issue. Refer to relevant theory and literature to support your reasoning. Consider different perspectives. How would a knowledgeable person perceive/handle this? What are the ethics involved?
Reconstructing	Reframe or reconstruct future practice or professional understanding. How would I deal with this next time? What might work and why? Are there different options? What might happen if …? Are my ideas supported by theory? Can I make changes to benefit others?

Table 1: The 4-Rs scale of reflection (Ryan & Ryan, 2013, p. 254)

As I am the researcher and also the Unit Coordinator, it was imperative to establish guidelines concerning how these reflections would be written and used from the outset. To begin, I committed to writing one entry per week. However, there was scope to add additional entries if a particular event or interaction sparked some connection to the phenomenon under study. This approach resulted in 23 entries in total across a 13-week semester. Each entry was between 1000 and 3000 words, and the overall journal close to 50 000 words in length. The starting point for each entry came from a specific incident that occurred during the Semester 1, 2017 offering of *Strategic Speech Communication*. As Bolton (2010) states, these need not be the most obvious or noteworthy incidents but rather something that caused me to ponder or question what this could mean in relation to PSA. For example, these entries may have

arisen from a conversation with a student concerning their feelings about a specific in-class activity. These initial points of contact were written up as part of the reporting/responding stage of the 4-Rs reflection model (Ryan & Ryan, 2013). This provided the impetus for further exploration through the remaining three levels of reflection. Therefore, the 4-Rs scale of reflection (Ryan & Ryan, 2013) offered both structure and flexibility in generating the data for this project.

Data analysis

The overall purpose of a study informs all research activity. Merriam (2009) suggests that, within a qualitative research framework, there is a dynamic interplay between how data is collected and analysed. This supports an ongoing and iterative approach where collection and analysis are done concurrently. Furthermore, this acknowledges that, while a well-thought-out research design can provide necessary guidelines and parameters, the nature of qualitative research means being open to possibilities:

> At the outset of a qualitative study, the investigator knows what the problem is and has selected a purposeful sample to collect data in order to address the problem. But the researcher does not know what will be discovered, what or whom to concentrate on, or what the final analysis will be like. (Merriam, 2009, p. 171)

An iterative approach to data analysis relies on a "process of meaning making" (Merriam, 2009, p. 176). This most often involves some type of coding where specific ideas are highlighted. Merriam (2009) refers to initial attempts of looking at the data as 'open coding', where first impressions or thoughts are acknowledged:

> As you read down through the transcript for example, you jot down notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margins. These notations are next to bits of data that strike you as interesting, potentially relevant, or important to your study. Think of yourself as having a conversation with the data, asking questions of it, making comments to it, and so on. (p. 178)

From here, the process of meaning making involves moving back and forth across the data, rethinking initial notations and looking for ways to consolidate, reduce and interpret what is on offer (Merriam, 2009). While acknowledging the utility of general qualitative guidelines, Stake (1995) suggests caution when dealing with case study research. He advises that a researcher always "attend[s] to the uniqueness and priority of the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 77). For Stake, data analysis is not a set time in the research process but is "a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations" (p. 71). These meanings can come about through interpretation and aggregation, that is, looking at individual occurrences and as well as what a culmination of these instances can mean (Stake, 1995).

Document analysis

Document analysis assists in understanding the history and context of a specific situation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It is an unobtrusive research method that complements other ways of collecting data, in this case, a reflective journal. For this study, I familiarised myself with existing unit documents and evaluations and applied a process of inductive analysis to identify issues that related to the phenomenon under study.[19] This analysis offered valuable insight into the unit as a whole and enabled me to focus on my research interest in context – how PSA is recognised and experienced in *Strategic Speech Communication.*

[19] Refer Appendix C for an excerpt from the tutor guide and Appendix D for an example of lecture slides.

Critical reflective practice

The main data source for Project 1 was my reflective journal and I used critical reflective practice to analyse this data. To do this, I developed a formal approach to recording my thoughts, ideas and reflections, resulting in a structured framework for each journal entry. The 4-Rs scale of reflection encourages an increasingly more analytical approach to reflection by working through the four headings of 1) reporting/responding, 2) relating, 3) reasoning and 4) reconstructing (Ryan & Ryan, 2013). Beginning with a more descriptive account of events, this manner of reflection can guide the researcher to connect to past experiences, overall attitudes and beliefs as well as the broader literature to build renewed understanding of a phenomenon. Specifically, this includes considering alternative perspectives about an idea as well as future implications.

In order to make sense of the extensive data in relation to PSA, an additional investigative process was utilised. Although not conforming to a traditional format for data analysis, each journal entry was further scrutinised through a rigorous, systematic process. This resulted in two extra columns added to my reflective journal template (refer Table 2).

Name of entry	**Initial thoughts/ideas**	**Key learnings**
Reporting/responding		
Relating		
Reasoning		
Reconstructing		

Table 2: The 4-Rs scale of reflection (Ryan & Ryan, 2013) with additional columns

In this framework, the first column was used to capture my initial thoughts prompted by the guiding question: ‘What could this event/interaction/moment in time have to say about recognition and/or experience of PSA?’ These were consolidated into significant ideas based on my repeated reading of each entry. Initially, the second column was used to identify common issues that began to emerge, and then re-emerge. At this point, my analysis was prompted by a second guiding question: ‘What does this mean in relation to PSA in an educational setting? Critically reflecting on common issues led to the articulation of key learnings, ultimately captured in the final column and prompted by a third guiding question: ‘What are the implications for learning and teaching?’

Key learnings were identified within each individual journal entry and emerged in an inductive manner. However, over time, central issues began to reappear, leading to a more deductive approach to the analysis (Merriam, 2009) and further refinement of the key learnings. These were then compared and contrasted across all journal entries to settle on a final parsimonious set of key learnings, which were grounded in my deepening understanding of the data and informed by my previous teaching experience and extensive engagement with the PSA literature. From a practical perspective, the key learnings[20] concentrated on (1) overall learning environment (including the potential impact of the current setting on future speaking experiences), (2) learning activities (covering planned tasks, skill development and assessment matters), (3) individual student differences/responses (internal and external manifestations of PSA; role of past speaking experiences), (4) feedback (formal and informal opportunities), (5) interacting with others (role of audience in PSA), (6) uncertainty (about task and personal ability) and (7) broader issues (working within higher education). Table 3 illustrates an excerpt from a completed journal entry detailing my meaning-making process.

[20] This is the original list from my journal. An expanded list can be found on p. 94.

Reasoning	Initial thoughts/ ideas	Key learnings
Over the years, I have had numerous conversations with people about oral presentations and public speaking. Many people have told me that they feel nervous or very nervous when getting up to speak. In particular, I have listened to numerous students talk about difficult past speaking experiences in an educational setting. Apart from questioning the appropriateness of some feedback comments, at times, I have also pondered the value of even having oral presentations for assessment if there is limited thought or support on offer. A slightly different take on this is offered by Mottet, Richmond & McCroskey (2016): "Students should be evaluated on what they learn in the subject matter of the class for which they are enrolled, and not penalised because of their ineptness or reluctance in oral presentations" (p. 64). When I first read this quote, I questioned it. Surely, the role of any subject / unit is to provide opportunities for students to become less inept, less reluctant? However, it relates to unit goals and objectives. Oral presentations shouldn't just be included because they are seen to be 'alternative' or 'real-world' assessment pieces. While I believe that students will have plenty of opportunities to speak a message in whatever field they end up in, that is not enough of a reason to include oral assessment pieces. If the subject / unit does not include intentional teaching time/resources about presenting an oral message, then maybe it is better to plan for a different method of assessment. Furthermore, if only one presentation is planned in a unit of study, what happens if students have a 'bad' or 'mediocre' day? With limited opportunity, (for example, one 5-7 minute speaking opportunity in one semester) is there any chance to build skills? Even in KCB103, with its focus on oral communication, students are given two oral presentations for assessment and one formative piece. While this unit does offer numerous in-class speaking exercises; the demands of assessment can bring different responses and feelings. This relates to how best to develop ongoing skills in this area including how to deal with an uncomfortable speaking experience. As mentioned in a previous entry (*Sounding like a home and away actor*) how important is it to have a conversation with a student after a presentation has not gone well? Time is an obvious issue. Live oral presentations for assessment take time. There is pressure to 'get through' all students in one or two tutorials. This can also mean limited time for oral feedback. Furthermore, how do educators know how a student is feeling at the conclusion of a presentation? In some cases, the behavioural signs are obvious (slumping in chair, looking downcast, even saying that didn't go well). But often in class assessment, one student finishes and the next student starts. There is limited time to consider individual student feelings, and what could be 'carried' to the next presentation.	Articulating nerves (how individuals are feelings / what they are thinking) Role of oral assessment Fairness of oral assessment? Providing support for oral presentations not just including oral presentations as an 'alternative' assessment How skills built /developed? In-class speaking opportunities versus assessment Timing of feedback? Does feedback travel from one task to the next? Classroom limitations - opportunities to speak and receive feedback. Overall issue of time and indiviudal needs	Individual differences / responses Learning activities (assessment) Learning activities (planned tasks, skill development and assessment) Feedback Broader considerations (working within HE) learning activities (skill development) Individual differences / responses

Table 3: Excerpt from my reflective journal

As part of the case study report the ‘student experience’ is represented in two ways. First, short anecdotes and student conversations are interspersed throughout each section as a way of articulating the students’ thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with PSA. Any descriptions of student interactions are presented via my interpretations from my reflective journal. Second, in the main, direct quotes are taken from the two student surveys undertaken during Semester 1, 2017. These quotes are presented verbatim; however, it is important to acknowledge my role in selecting these quotes for inclusion in the case study report to illustrate and deepen understanding of key learnings from this study.

Wider application

PSA has been studied extensively through large-scale experimental research designs. However, as shown in the early review of literature, a gap exists in providing practical learning and teaching support from predominately statistical findings. It is for these reasons that an instrumental case study has been used to deepen understanding of this phenomenon by undertaking a qualitative study in the context of an undergraduate university oral communication unit at QUT. In line with my approach to both education and research, I have taken an interpretive stance to consider a range of different student experiences and perspectives. The strength of such research rests on the ‘integrity of its thinking’ (Stake, 2010). In doing so, the uniqueness of the case is accepted and the potential for further interpretation (through the reader or subsequent research) is promoted. Specifically, key findings from this research can add to existing theoretical discussions or, potentially, build new theories to support the development of sustainable speaking practices.

The ability to advance theoretical generalisations is a debated issue within case study research. However, as Grbich (1999) states, it depends on “the usefulness of one set of findings in explaining other similar situations” (p. 66). As my literature review reveals, PSA

is a complex phenomenon that affects individual speakers in different ways and levels of intensity. Within the cohort of students studying *Strategic Speech Communication*, it is likely that there will be a variety of attitudes, beliefs, expectations and past experiences with speaking in front of others. Therefore, it is possible that any findings will have appeal beyond this unit.

The DCI offers a practical platform for investigating PSA in a classroom environment. As an experienced educator, I actively sought to explore this phenomenon in new and practical ways with the overall intent to inform and strengthen future learning and teaching practices. With a focus on critical reflection, Project 1 acknowledges the subjectivity inherent in this type of research design. Therefore, while adhering to a planned and organised approach to data collection and analysis, the voice of the researcher is embraced as part of this DCI project. This is in keeping with Stake's (1995) understanding of the uniqueness of utilising a case study design:

> I seek to make sense of certain observations of the case by watching as closely as I can and by thinking about it as deeply as I can. It is greatly subjective. I defend it because I know no better way to make sense of the complexities of my case. (p. 77)

Project 1 findings are discussed in the following case study report.

Case study report

Structuring the report

This report begins with a brief background of the case providing historical context. It includes an overview of the three to four weeks prior to the commencement of the semester of study. From here, the main body of the report draws on my journal and critical reflections to explore how PSA is recognised and experienced in an educational setting. To do this, I elected to follow the natural progression of the unit, resulting in four sections – the beginning (Weeks 1-3), middle (Weeks 4-6), major assessment weeks (Weeks 7-8) and end of semester (Weeks 9-13). Each section begins with a synopsis of planned activities before moving to a discussion that draws upon relevant key learnings identified in my journal. As previously stated, key learnings were prompted by the question: 'What are the implications for learning and teaching?' Acknowledging the holistic and integrated nature of learning and teaching, these have been used to illuminate elements of the case study that informed my thinking about PSA and effective responses to support student learning. This case study was undertaken in first semester, 2017. The teaching period ran from 27 February to 2 June. Two hundred and forty-four students completed the unit during this time.

Getting to know the case

In the 1970s, QUT[21] established its first communication department. One of the earliest speech units was called *Communication 1A.* At this time, speech communication was a seminal area of study in North American higher education. This first speech offering at QUT was based in the North American tradition and drew on US-based texts. Over time,

[21] QUT was formerly known as QIT (Queensland Institute of Technology). It became QUT in 1989.

Communication 1A became known as *Strategic Speech Communication* (P. McCarthy,[22] personal communication, 13 August, 2017). It is now a required unit in two degree programs – Bachelor of Media and Communication and Bachelor of Mass Communication. *Strategic Speech Communication* runs in both teaching semesters of an academic year with a cohort of approximately 250 students in first semester and 115 students in second semester.

At the core of the speech communication discipline is a practical approach to the teaching of public speaking skills that recognises the importance of both scholarship and instruction (Kelly & Eaten, 2000). As evidenced through the unit outline, tutor guide and lecture slides, *Strategic Speech Communication* reflects this theory/practice nexus. In particular, it draws on theories of language and rhetoric in relation to creating and analysing oral messages. Rhetoric has strong historical links to persuasion and is regarded as one of the most ancient communication traditions (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 2014; Littlejohn, 2002). In more contemporary times, scholars have moved away from the term persuasion and instead emphasised the notion of invitation (Foss & Griffin, 1995). Invitational rhetoric is described as a more cooperative approach to communication where the central goal is not necessarily to enact change. This differs to more traditional rhetorical theory, which emphasises persuasion as the main objective (Foss & Griffin, 1995).

In *Strategic Speech Communication*, rhetoric is defined as an invitation to accept a particular version of reality. This definition acknowledges the role of audience in any communication exchange, as well as the choices that speakers and audience members make when constructing and listening to any message. More specifically, this aligns with an ethical

[22] Patsy McCarthy and Jillian Clare are the two former Unit Coordinators of *Strategic Speech Communication*. I am extremely grateful to them both for their knowledge, experience and passion in this area, and for their faith in me.

approach to communication which recognises that, while a speaker may invite others to consider a specific point of view, audience members exercise personal choice in relation to how they respond or choose to interact with the message. With a focus on oral communication, this unit recognises that speaking in front of others brings with it varying feelings of unease or anxiety. To assist with this, students are given ongoing opportunities to speak and receive feedback throughout the semester of study (refer Appendix C for an excerpt from the tutor guide).

Preparing to teach

The weeks prior to the start of semester are a busy time. For Unit Coordinators, this involves finalising the selection of tutors, initiating contracts, loading material to online portals, updating resources (including student and tutor guides, lectures, assessment tasks and support documents) and dealing with a variety of administrative demands. As *Strategic Speech Communication* is an oral communication unit, tutorial enrolments are kept to 22 students[23] to ensure everyone has a chance to speak and receive feedback (both for in-class activities and assessment times). QUT uses a web-based learning management system called Blackboard. This provides access to additional and/or complementary learning resources online. Blackboard sites are often pre-loaded, which means that students have access to some material before teaching begins. In *Strategic Speech Communication,* early offerings include unit details, learning resources, assessment tasks and contact details.

The delivery mode for *Strategic Speech Communication* involves weekly lectures and tutorials. This results in 12 one-hour lectures and 11 one-and-a-half hour tutorials across a 13-week semester. The tutorials are run as interactive workshops. While students are

[23] Although this is the recommended number, sometimes enrolments increase to 23/24 in each tutorial.

encouraged to attend all tutorials, three are required for assessment purposes: to submit a planning guide[24] (Week 6), present the major oral presentation (Weeks 7 and 8) and present the short oral presentation (Week 11). Tutorial rooms are spread throughout the campus. The stipulation for this unit is that we need versatile rooms with access to a computer/data projector. This means no fixed furniture, but rather tables and chairs that can be moved to create a workshop space. Figure 4 is a room that was used in Semester 1, 2017. It provides a good space for this unit and can easily be reconfigured for whole class discussion (seats in a circle), small groups (smaller circles) and speeches (two to three semi-circles of chairs facing the speaker).

Figure 4: Photograph of a typical tutorial room

[24] From the beginning of 2018, the planning guide became an online submission. However, students are still required to attend the Week 6 tutorial for final topic approval.

Weeks 1–3

> Twenty[25] students enter a room. They push the tables to the side and set up the chairs in a circle. A brief introduction is given, "This is a speaking unit. We believe you will have many opportunities to speak a message both professionally and personally. We also believe that different people have different feelings about speaking in front of others. Therefore, this is a safe place and a place for you to practise your speaking skills. To help ensure this is a supportive space, we think it's important to get to know each other from the start" (Reflective journal entry 2, 2017).

The goal of the first tutorial is to establish a positive classroom environment through a series of progressively challenging activities. Short tasks are used to encourage all students to participate regardless of prior experiences. In Week 1, this means beginning with a whole-class activity, moving to a paired activity and finishing with two individual activities where students speak about themselves. Detailed instructions are given, which includes the use of simple prompts. For example, one activity invites students to introduce another student by answering four questions: (1) what was the student doing last year? (2) what are they doing now? (3) what are they hoping to get out of this unit? (4) what is one fun fact that you have discovered? Another activity asks students to find three things from their bag that say something about them. From their seats, they physically show each item and explain why they have it or why it is important to them. One student said:

[25] This is based on my first tutorial for the semester. Twenty out of 23 students participated in this tutorial. It is important to note that, while I have considered *Strategic Speech Communication* as a whole, a number of my journal entries are based on reflections from the three tutorials that I taught in first semester 2017.

> I have my headphones because I love listening to music, a Nando's card because I'm addicted to their chips and I also have an umbrella because even though it's not raining today, I like knowing it's there just in case. (Student response, 2017)

The first lecture is also planned to reinforce the supportive nature of this unit. For example, in the Week 1 lecture, I mentioned PSA and promoted this unit as a safe place. The next day I received the following email:

> I am one of your students in KCB103. I wanted to tell you that I experience stage fright when interacting with people. I am glad that you raised this during the lecture and hope that you will guide me with an effective way to deal with it. (Student email, 28 February, 2017)

The Week 2 tutorial is likewise made up of a series of short speaking tasks. Each task includes a suggested structure or framework to assist in developing a message. This approach supports an extemporaneous[26] mode of delivery, which is the recommended method in this unit. These introductory activities lead to an extended speaking opportunity (2.5 minutes) in Week 3, as part of a formative assessment task. For this activity, students are asked to follow a simple past/present/future structure, which includes a personal story from their past that relates to something they are doing or feeling in the present and may have some implications for their future.

[26] There are three modes of delivery for planned presentations – manuscript, memorised and extemporaneous. In this unit, extemporaneous is defined as being well planned, knowing where you are going, but not being committed to an exact word order in the mind (memorised) or on the page (manuscript).

During these early weeks of the semester, there are a number of other ways that students can find out more about the speaking components of this unit. First, weekly lectures introduce key tools and concepts that will be used to create and analyse spoken messages. Second, the Blackboard site includes support material for the Week 3 formative piece and major oral presentation (Weeks 7 and 8). Resources include task sheets, initial planning questions, marking rubrics, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document and instructional videos. Lastly, in an effort to gauge different attitudes and past experiences in relation to speaking in front of others, students are invited to complete an oral communication self-assessment form and a modified version of the PRPSA (McCroskey, 1970) in Week 2.

Learning environment

Providing a safe and supportive environment is a key consideration of this unit from the outset. It is not uncommon to receive a number of student emails in the first few weeks of the semester. Regardless of the enquiry, I endeavour to write a positive reply. That may mean providing reasons for not being able to make a tutorial change or alter assessment dates,[27] or supplying links to other support mechanisms and resources (including how to submit an extension request). Early contact points provide a good way of setting the scene in relation to how this unit operates. It has been my experience that taking a little more time at the beginning of semester helps to establish goodwill and build rapport. (Refer Appendix E for the first Blackboard announcement.) In addition, if a student has a specific need, I offer to meet them. For example, in the past I have met students who have identified as having specific learning needs to find out how this unit could best support them. This usually

[27] The Creative Industries Faculty (CIF) does not advocate participation marks, which means that students have the right to attend or not attend scheduled classes. Nevertheless, if a planned absence corresponds with an assessment date, then an official extension must be obtained.

eventuates from a disability plan that has been sent to me prior to the start of semester. These procedures are not unique to *Strategic Speech Communication*. However, given the nature of this unit, it makes sense to model clear, concise and considered communication from the outset.

The initial tutorial is usually the first time that tutors and students have met. Unless a disability plan has been sent, or some prior contact made, there is no way of knowing how individual students are feeling about undertaking this unit. What is known is that the word 'speech' in the unit's title is confronting for some, as too is the set-up of the tutorial room. Early feelings of uncertainty are indicated by this student comment: "At the start of the semester I was dreading this subject, but after the first tutorial it had already become one of my favourite units" (Insight student survey, 2017). Therefore, this unit acknowledges upfront that speaking in front of others is not a favoured activity, which corresponds with general findings about the prevalence of PSA for both students and the broader population (Richmond et al., 2013). It also recognises the importance of providing early positive experiences to encourage ongoing participation (Schunk, 1991).

Interacting with others

The overall set-up of this unit provides opportunity for ongoing classroom discussion. This presents an interesting paradox. On the one hand, the unit is based on the need for students to speak and interact with both peers and the tutor. This can be especially difficult for students who experience high levels of trait-like CA in which all forms of oral communication can prove difficult. On the other hand, such speaking opportunities can lead to more engagement with in-class activities and unit content (Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 2005). Furthermore, a positive classroom experience is seen to contribute to a student's ability to succeed in any unit. This success is linked to being able to "seek

clarification on material, discuss content, seek advice, or just get to know the instructor" (Frymier, 2005, p. 201).

While lectures and online resources provide important contextualisation of the unit as a whole, tutorials offer more relational support. As with any group, individual members contribute to the dynamics of each tutorial. However, the tutor has an integral role in establishing the classroom culture. The term 'teacher immediacy' (Hsu, 2010) is used to describe the types of communication practices that can promote a supportive classroom culture. These practices include effective use of eye contact, body language, facial expressions, gesture and humour (Hsu, 2010). These positive teaching behaviours mirror what is seen as effective communication practice in general. Official student feedback in this unit often includes some mention of individual tutors and how they have set up a reassuring environment:

> Excellent unit that is great for students who are willing to increase their confidence with public speaking. Extremely helpful staff that make the unit easy to understand and very interesting at the same time. [Tutor X] is also very interactive in the tutorials and is extremely friendly and supportive. (Pulse student survey, 2017)

Providing opportunities for students to have contact with tutors outside of designated class times has been identified as a success factor (Frymier, 2005; Hsu, 2010). However, this is a challenge in the current university context. As with students, tutors have other responsibilities, including employment outside of university. Also, as tutors are paid by the hour, it is important to consider overall expectations of what this payment actually covers. While advances in technology have provided more flexible approaches to communication, the time factor for sessional staff must still be recognised. This is further complicated by

recommendations that students experiencing moderate to high PSA require more support, including more interaction, as a way of lessening uncertainty (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004; Hunter et al., 2014; Kelly & Keaten, 2000; Roberts et al., 2005).

This type of support is not just confined to the tutor/student relationship, but also exists within the tutorial group as a whole. A key recommendation in the PSA literature is that tutors should encourage those listening to be as attentive as possible and, again, includes consideration of both verbal and non-verbal feedback (Finn et al., 2009a). In *Strategic Speech Communication*, this approach is developed rather than directed. That is, students regularly switch roles between speaker and listener for in-class activities as well as during assessment periods. This dynamic, which is established in Week 1, makes for a more interactive environment and, without the confines of desks, helps to promote a more attentive audience. Overall, how we teach this unit is intricately tied to what we teach.

The role of a supportive audience has other benefits in relation to building competent and confident speaking practices. From Week 1, students have many opportunities to watch their peers present a spoken message. This can help to model skills as well as share feelings related to PSA. For example, during classroom activities it is not uncommon to hear a student say: “Can you see my legs shaking?” or “I can’t believe how nervous I feel right now”. Audience members often respond with positive affirmations, including: “No, you don’t look nervous at all” or “I feel/felt really nervous, too”. This type of “perceived similarity to models” (Schunk, 1989, p. 175) can help to normalise thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with PSA (Robinson, 1997). Again, tutors help to create a space where students have permission to explain how they are feeling as indicated in this comment: “[Tutor Y] made everyone in the class feel comfortable presenting in front of an audience by creating a safe space free of judgement” (Pulse student survey, 2017).

Social interactions can also build rapport with two positive implications. First, anxious speakers may benefit from working on speaking tasks with others (for example in Week 1 with the paired introductions); second, feelings of anxiety can lessen when speaking with a familiar audience (Booth-Butterfield, 1988). In particular, this unit offers weekly opportunities to speak in front of others in the lead up to the first oral assessment piece. This mirrors instructional advice that supports a staggered approach to "build[ing] confidence and refin[ing] presentation skills" across a semester of study (Witt & Behnke, 2006, p. 169).

Individual differences

During the course of this semester, it became apparent that first impressions of individual students are not always accurate as evidenced in the following reflections. At the end of my first tutorial of the semester, I told the class that I thought it was going to be a supportive group and I thanked them for their participation. One student (Student A) remained behind and mentioned this comment. She said that the class had not seemed supportive to her and that other students had seemed slow to approach her during the activities. At the end of my second tutorial in Week 1, another student (Student B) approached me. She said that she had felt very nervous participating in the activities. She also said that she was worried about the Week 3 formative task and whether or not she could speak for 'that long' (2.5 minutes).

It is a common occurrence for students to ask a question or make a comment at the end of a tutorial. In an oral communication unit, this can involve disclosing personal feelings about current or future tasks. Sometimes this admission can come as a surprise. For example, with the students just mentioned (Students A and B), it had not been obvious to me during the class that they were experiencing difficulty. In fact, my recollection of the second student was that she had been an active member of the tutorial and had actually spoken the longest during the activities. This highlights how individuals can respond to stressful situations both

internally and externally. In relation to the literature, it suggests that internal thoughts and feelings (psychological and physiological) may not necessarily connect with external indicators (behavioural) (Mottet et al., 2016). This may result in seemingly engaged students experiencing discomfort, or anxiety, without visibly showing it. Alternatively, a student who appears disengaged may also be experiencing some form of internal conflict related to a present activity or past experience.

During Week 2, the tutorial includes a 40-minute vocal awareness workshop. Information is interspersed with short speaking activities, which can be a new experience for many students. In one tutorial, two students appeared to finish each activity early so I asked one of them (Student C) how he was feeling and if this tutorial was taking him outside of his comfort zone. He replied: "It is taking me outside of my comfort zone 100 per cent". He followed this up by stating that he could see value in presenting without a script (referring to the extemporaneous mode) because that method had not worked for him at high school. He recalled trying to memorise speeches which he said "always ended badly". His final two comments did not relate to the activity just completed, but to broader discussions that had taken place in both Weeks 1 and 2. In short, this student was not just responding to the immediate planned activity but was replying in light of the unit as a whole, as well as previous opportunities to speak in front of others.

Past speaking experiences, as part of environmental factors, are one of three potential causes of PSA when a multi-causal paradigm is adopted. The other two are biological disposition and/or a skills deficit (Sawyer, 2016). In practical terms, this means that competent speaking habits are not just developed through instruction and that students may still feel anxious in a supportive classroom environment. Finally, individual experiences are not confined to the classroom. Other experiences can also influence the way a student

approaches communication. For example, at the end of a Week 2 tutorial, a student (Student D) told me a challenging personal story that related to why she did not enjoy speaking in front of others. Again, this student's admission of "feeling very nervous" did not correspond with my impression of her ability during class activities. This student illustrates how past experiences in general can influence current speaking perceptions in relation to overall ability and capability, which reflects an SCT perspective (Schunk, 1989).

To understand individual differences, which includes past experiences, the initial oral communication self-assessment form asks the following two questions: 'What type of feedback have you received in the past concerning your presentation skills? [and] What are some areas that you would like to work on during this unit to enhance your communication skills?' Of 40 forms returned in Week 2[28] across my three tutorials, the four most prevalent themes in relation to past feedback and future areas for development were: nerves and confidence, pace of speaking, commitment to a script and eye contact. In particular, students reported that past teacher comments drew heavily on observable behaviour, including reference to paralanguage (for example, pitch, pace, pause, volume and vocal variety) as well as body language (for example, eye contact, facial expressions and gestures). This is reflective of assessment demands, where teachers make judgements about how competent a speaker appears from such nonverbal cues.

As discussed in the literature review, behavioural speech anxiety is only one of three responses connected to CA and PSA (the other two being physiological and psychological). In an effort to gauge how a student generally feels when asked to speak in front of others, the oral communication self-assessment form also includes a modified version of

[28] The oral communication self-assessment form and the PRPSA are not compulsory and students can submit in Week 3 if they wish.

McCroskey's (1970) PRPSA. This 34-question survey uses a five-point Likert scale to identify low, moderate or high levels of trait PSA.[29] Based on the 30 surveys returned in Week 2, the following breakdown was recorded: five students (low anxiety); five students (moderately low anxiety); six students (moderate anxiety); six students (moderately high anxiety) and eight students (high anxiety). In summary, close to half of respondents (47 per cent) were deemed to experience moderately high to high PSA. While this figure is lower than McCroskey's (1989) finding that 70 per cent of North American students experienced moderately high to high levels of trait PSA, it could be attributed to the small sample size and the fact that these students were enrolled in an oral communication unit. However, it still supports the notion that it is "normal to experience a fairly high degree of anxiety" about public speaking (Richmond et al., 2013, p. 36).

Learning activities (planned tasks)

In *Strategic Speech Communication*, students are given an opportunity to write down areas for personal development as part of the oral communication self-assessment form (Week 2). Improving confidence is frequently mentioned, as with the following student comments:

> I want to work on my confidence talking to a group because when I get nervous I mumble, forget what I'm saying and speak too fast. Additionally, perhaps learning a tactic to help memorise a script better would be handy (Student self-assessment form, 2017).

[29] On completion of the PRPSA, a score is calculated between 34 and 170. This final score is seen to indicate low trait PSA (34-84); moderately low trait PSA (85-92); moderate trait PSA (93-110); moderately high trait PSA (111-119) and high trait PSA (120-170) (Richmond et al., 2013). These authors suggest that while a score in the moderate range (93-110) can still impact a speaker at the time of delivery, "the level of anxiety is not likely to be so severe that the individual won't be able to cope with it" (p. 36).

> I would really like to work on being more confident in speaking without a script in an impromptu setting. Being put on the spot is very daunting for me and when I'm nervous I can speak very quickly (Student self-assessment form, 2017).

> I am hoping to become a lot more confident with speaking as usually during high school I was stapled to the lectern. I hope to be able to improve memorising my speeches, increase my mobility while talking and use hand gestures to further emphasise points (Student self-assessment form, 2017).

These comments reflect different ideas surrounding confident speaking habits. In particular, two of them refer to memorisation. As mentioned, this unit favours an extemporaneous approach to speaking, which means being well planned but not scripted (memorised or manuscript). This is a new approach for many students. It also has the potential to increase "tension and nervousness" due to the "unpredictability of specific wording" (Witt & Behnke, 2006, p. 174). As discussed previously, learning activities in this unit are designed to build understanding of this delivery method from Week 1.

Feedback

The Week 3 formative task is intentionally placed early in the semester to support an extemporaneous mode of delivery. In addition, it is an opportunity for students to receive feedback ahead of the major oral presentation (Weeks 7 and 8). In Semester 1, 2017, of the 65 students I saw across three tutorials, 54 attended and presented their formative piece. While no grades are attached to this exercise, the set-up is similar to a summative assessment piece. That is, students are required to speak for an extended period (2.5 minutes) while the tutor listens and writes comments. It is a favoured tutorial for both students and tutors as this previous student comment indicates:

> I am impressed that in the tutorial we were able to do a formative assessment piece. This was not a marked assessment but we were able to have a practice speaking in front of an audience. The tutor gave us feedback and spoke to us one on one. It was a great learning environment. (Insight student survey, 2016)

In relation to the formative task, students become part of a feedback conversation. With 22 students in each class, the formative speeches last for one hour. In the remaining 30 minutes, I hand back my written comments and speak briefly to each student. In one tutorial, I gave positive feedback to a student (Student E). She said that she was pleased to hear that it had gone well because she could not remember speaking: "Nerves often make me feel extremely light-headed. I know that I am opening my mouth but it sometimes feels as if someone else is doing the speaking," she said. When I told her that another student had commented on how well she had spoken, she seemed genuinely surprised.

A common instructional prompt, and one that we use in *Strategic Speech Communication*, is to encourage students to consider one thing that worked well and one thing that could be done differently next time they are called upon to speak. While this seems to promote some level of self-reflection, specific students may benefit from a more guided approach that includes an opportunity to talk through their recollections of the speaking task as well as feedback comments, as indicated by the above interaction.

Individual differences

While planned activities provide a necessary developmental structure, they must be flexible enough to cater for individual differences. For example, moments before a student (Student F) was due to present her Week 3 formative task, she turned to me and said that she felt overwhelmed and could not go on. We spoke at the end of the tutorial where she mentioned

a recent negative family experience. She said that when another student had included a similar story in her talk, she had been unable to think about anything else and had not been in the right state of mind to speak. Instead, I offered her a chance to present her formative piece to me at the end of the following tutorial. In another tutorial, I provided a piece of paper with 22 numbers and asked students to write their name beside a number to create a speaking roster. One student (Student G) had written her name beside number 2; however, the number 1 spot had been left blank. Therefore, she went first. She started but quickly stopped. She said that she had not prepared herself to go first. The next speaker was willing to present. After he had gone, the 'first' student got up and said that she was ready now.

Both students (F and G) completed the formative assessment task. More importantly, they had some say in the decision-making process about when they would present. These two examples highlight the immediacy of live speaking and show that a sudden change in circumstance can result in heightened feelings of unease for individual students. Student G's experience relates to conspicuousness or novelty in being called upon to speak first (Buss, 1980). Student F reacted to another speaker's content. It could be argued that this latter example is not related to PSA. However, if this student had been required to present, then future implications must be considered (in particular, the potential for this simple formative task to become a 'negative past speaking experience'). While there is only one planned formative piece in the semester, regular opportunities to stand and speak in front of peers provides ongoing feedback. Therefore, as with formative assessment, in-class activities are seen to be developmental (Sadler, 2010). To cater for individual differences, planned activities may need to be modified (as with Students F and G). In a classroom environment, such modifications are made while still ensuring that the workshop or lesson progresses for all students.

The activities in the first three weeks of the semester are planned deliberately to assist in building relationships, understanding individual differences and providing initial strategies to move through a message. While lectures aim to be informative and encouraging, tutorials provide more relational support and set the overall tone of this unit. In particular, the first tutorial introduces the extemporaneous mode of delivery in an informal manner. From short speaking tasks that include providing ‘hooks to hang ideas on’, students are progressively challenged to speak a message without a script. This culminates with the formative speaking task in Week 3. The initial three weeks of semester reflect key themes in the literature around establishing a positive classroom culture and providing activities that build in difficulty. However, early conversations with students suggest that a general impression of either an engaged or disengaged student may mask underlying tensions or concerns.

Weeks 4–6

The Weeks 4–6 tutorials and lectures build on previous discussions, activities and resources. In both spaces, connections are made between key theoretical concepts and the major oral presentation. In particular, tutorials focus on planning, structuring and delivering a talk with a specific audience in mind. Table 4 (refer page 62) outlines some of the speaking tasks planned for these three weeks. Following the PRE plan activity in Week 5, tutors provide direct instruction on how to structure a speaking outline. A video example is given that supports an extemporaneous mode of delivery and demonstrates how a structured message can be reduced to dot points. As mentioned, not having an exact word order on a piece of paper or device can be unsettling and result in a speaker feeling confused, uncomfortable and lacking in control (Witt & Behnke, 2006). In fact, Witt and Behnke (2006) found that the extemporaneous mode was similar to the impromptu mode for some students, with both increasing levels of apprehension. This reinforces the need for targeted support in assisting students to use this mode of delivery.

Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Paired scenario In pairs, students construct a message in response to a scenario, such as: *You are QUT journalism tutors speaking to first-year students encouraging them to start a blog while at university.* During the preparation stage (10–15 minutes) a number of questions are considered including, what are typical issues and arguments that will resonate with this audience in these circumstances? Both students present (1–2 minutes). The rest of the class is invited to mention anything that they thought worked particularly well – for example, effective linking statements, appeals to pathos, strong evidence and language.	**Grumble chair** A chair is placed at the front of the room and students are encouraged to sit in the chair and state a simple complaint. The structure is: Here's my point (P) and here's my reason (R). **PRE plan** An extension of the grumble chair. Students use a PRE structure (point, reason and example) to advance an idea connected to their upcoming major oral presentation. Students speak this message three times to three different people. The listener can ask questions or provide supportive comments. The speaker may modify his/her message from one listener to the next.	**PowerPoint talk** A series of 10 slides are displayed. The theme is 'Life at QUT'. Each slide features a photograph associated with university. In groups of three or four, students present a short talk to prospective QUT students. **Oral presentation summary** Individually, students provide a short summary of their upcoming talk. A series of prompt questions include: (1) Where are you speaking? (2) Why are you speaking? (3) Who is in front of you? (4) What might be their concerns? (5) What are two key points you plan to make? (6) The final question seeks clarification via the following prompt, 'One thing I am still not sure about is…'.

Table 4: Example tutorial speaking tasks from Weeks 4–6

Learning activities (skill development)

Unpacking theory through practical application is a traditional approach to teaching speech communication. It also aligns with skills training, which is mentioned in the literature as a potential cause of PSA (skills deficit) as well as a prescribed treatment option (hence the word 'training'). In *Strategic Speech Communication*, skills training takes on a broader approach and includes direct instruction as well as Glaser's (1981) extended considerations of modelling, goal setting, in vivo practice and self-monitoring. In a classroom setting, 'in vivo practice' connects with exposure therapy where students are given ongoing opportunities to speak a message. Again, these opportunities rely on establishing a positive and reassuring environment where students are not only encouraged to participate but to believe that they can participate, which links personal beliefs with actual behaviour (Bandura, 1986).

With the Week 5 activities (grumble chair and PRE plan), prompts are offered as a way of progressing a line of reasoning. Providing such a structured approach is advocated for highly anxious speakers (Kelly & Keaten, 2000). However, such prompts can still be modified to allow for different speaking abilities. For example, as part of the grumble chair activity, one student (Student H) gave the following short talk: "My grumble is a literal one. I have not eaten anything since breakfast and my stomach is making strange noises. This is also making me cranky so I guess it fits the requirement of this task". This is a clever manipulation of the stated prompts (make a point and follow with a reason) that resulted in a round of applause from the audience. However, the prompts also allow for a student to present a shorter, more direct message, as with Student I: "My grumble is that my bus didn't turn up this morning and I ended up being 30 minutes late for my first lecture". As Robinson (1997) states, establishing a positive classroom culture is not specifically part of skills training, but it allows for the development of skills to take place. This suggests that the classroom climate plays a far more important role than simply making students feel comfortable. It enables them to be more proactive in their learning, which has the potential to build self-efficacy beliefs.

Individual differences / Feedback

Students enter and exit the unit with different attitudes and experiences in connection to public speaking. Therefore, the succession of activities on offer needs to cope and cater for such differences, which extends beyond initial feelings of unease at the commencement of study. A situational change can occur at any time during the semester with the potential of activating state PSA. In relation to building sustainable speaking practices, this means learning from experiences that may not have gone to plan. For example, in the middle of an in-class activity, Student J stopped and said: "I have no idea where I'm going with this". Sometimes the tutor might offer an additional prompt question or the student may prefer to sit down and listen to the next speaker. These approaches relate to proxy agency (receiving

assistance from others) and collective agency (sharing a communal goal of developing effective speaking skills) (Bandura, 2001).

In Week 6, students submit a planning guide for their major oral presentation. As part of this submission, they are asked to think about an area they would like to work on in relation to feedback received from the Week 3 formative task. One student (Student K) wrote that she was "proud and surprised [by her] positive feedback" and that she planned to work on her pace and volume with the upcoming presentation. She also detailed two strategies to help her achieve a more measured pace and louder volume. The ability to unpack feedback (both current and past) can assist students with high feedback sensitivity where comments can be interpreted more negatively than intended (Smith & King, 2004).

Learning activities (planned tasks)

Repeated opportunities to present a message in front of a familiar and supportive group of people can lessen PSA symptoms (Finn et al., 2009a). This type of exposure therapy is seen to assist in creating more positive connections to speaking tasks by allowing time for emotional processing. This processing links to the favoured habituation pattern that results in declining feelings of anxiety achieved throughout the milestones of anticipation, confrontation, adaptation and release (Behnke & Sawyer, 2001). It is based on an understanding that an individual's 'fear response' to a specific situation, such as public speaking, can be modified both cognitively and behaviourally through repeated opportunities to speak.

The PRE plan activity (Week 5) is a modified version of TRIPLESPEAK,[30] which is described as a "multiple-exposure treatment technique" (Finn et al., 2009a, p. 98). Apart from delivering the same message numerous times, TRIPLESPEAK provides a chance to self-monitor and potentially change the way the message is delivered from one listener to the next. In addition, it allows students to hear other people's ideas and therefore acts as a form of modelling while giving students opportunities to give and receive feedback. Again, this type of 'multiple-exposure' relies on establishing a positive environment where students feel comfortable practising planned messages and discussing ideas with peers. While acknowledging the obvious benefits of techniques such as TRIPLESPEAK, there are constraints in allowing for repeated attempts in a classroom environment. As previously mentioned, even in a designated oral communication class, such as *Strategic Speech Communication*, there is limited time to revisit activities. Furthermore, simply encouraging students to practise on their own at home may assist in developing speaking skills in general but, in relation to alleviating PSA, such practice may be ineffective as the major cause of anxiety – an audience – is absent.

Uncertainty (about task)

The two main tasks in Week 6 are designed to reduce uncertainty in very practical ways. This is in keeping with Witt and Behnke's (2006) suggestion that if speakers know what to expect, they can feel less anxious. First, the activity with the slides is to encourage students to become familiar with the speaking space as well as using technology. At the most basic level, this means practising with a presentation clicker in hand so that a new object is not introduced on the day of assessment. Second, the six questions allow each speaker to provide a succinct summary of their topic choice. In addition, the final question invites students to

[30] TRIPLESPEAK is a pedagogical approach to reducing CA and PSA developed by Dubner and Mills (1984).

share an area of concern and brainstorm possible solutions with the tutorial group. From semester 1, 2017, these concerns included:

1. Am I pitching my talk to the right audience?
2. How will I use visuals throughout my talk?
3. What kind of language should I be using, considering who I am talking to?
4. How will I stop myself from shaking when I'm speaking?
5. What will happen if I forget what I want to say?
6. How will I actually structure my talk?
7. How will I use the speaking space and not just stay in one spot?
8. Should I still memorise my talk to ensure I don't forget anything?
9. What will I do if I suddenly blank out?
10. How formal should I be for my intended audience?

Any one of these issues could eventuate in a feeling of unease; however, in relation to this study, questions 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 reflect fears of being unable to get through a talk or appearing outwardly nervous when speaking. Overall, this Week 6 activity is a useful one. It provides another opportunity for students to stand and speak in front of the class, and to seek assistance with final preparation demands. It may also encourage a more engaged audience during assessment weeks because topic ideas have been heard and understood ahead of time. On reflection, it may be possible to extend this activity as earlier opportunities to discuss a matter of concern may prove more useful for anxious speakers.

Individual differences

In-class activities and actual assessment tasks can bring about very different feelings, especially in relation to formality and evaluation. By Week 4, students are expected to have

watched the assessment overview video, considered the initial planning questions and started to work on the planning guide. However, this is not always the case. For some students, PSA could be a contributing factor. Research suggests that highly anxious students may procrastinate for as long as possible. This relates to the most obvious behavioural symptom of PSA, that of avoidance (Mottet et al., 2016).

PSA is not the only reason why some students delay preparing for the major oral presentation. For example, it may be a time management issue or competing demands with other units, work or outside interests. If a student attends the Week 5 tutorial without a clear topic choice, an alternative approach is offered in relation to the PRE speaking activity. For example, students are encouraged to speak about a possible idea or to simply use the PRE structure to advance any point of interest. In assisting students with potential topic ideas, I sometimes suggest they consider a reason why they might be invited to speak at their old secondary school. This can provide a credible scenario that meets assessment demands.[31] In one tutorial, this resulted in the following idea from one student:

> I took senior music at high school. A possible speaking opportunity is that my music teacher has invited me back to talk to current Year 10 students about the value of selecting music as a subject in senior. I could talk about the fact that music is an academic subject and counts towards your OP. I could also say that as a more creative subject, it helps to relieve stress in Years 11 and 12. My personal experiences could be used to back up these points. (Student L, 2017)

[31] The task for the major oral presentation is to think of a speaking opportunity that they could see themselves giving either now or in the near future. It could be related to their area of study or something they are involved in outside of university. In keeping with unit content, it needs to be a realistic or plausible situation that includes a reason for speaking and an intended audience.

This more guided approach may also assist in lessening feelings of anxiety (Kelly & Keaten, 2000). It makes sense that, if a student is unable to decide on a topic, then preparation time would be delayed. It is for this reason that scholars suggest students are given a chance to work on the oral presentation as soon as it is announced (Witt & Behnke, 2006). In *Strategic Speech Communication*, a number of resources about the major oral presentation are available from the beginning of semester (as mentioned, in *Weeks 1–3*). There are also opportunities to discuss potential topics in tutorials, including looking at past student examples.

Uncertainty (personal ability)

In early lectures, I ask students to let me know if they have any concerns about completing the first major speaking task because of nerves. This has resulted in between one and four students getting in contact each semester. My approach is to engage students in the decision-making process in relation to when and where they will present their major oral presentation. This fits with a modified version of systematic desensitisation (Lane, et al., 2009), where the student has some control over the feared stimulus. It is my experience that in taking the time to come and discuss this matter, these students want to move forward. While still meeting assessment requirements, students are able to create and enact specific goals that recognise their level of confidence with the task at hand (Zimmerman, 2002).

If a student has missed a number of tutorials, I email them directly. In addition to checking how they are, I also mention any key dates regarding withdrawing from units without academic and/or financial penalty. Student M was not enrolled in my tutorial, but I recognised his name as someone who had started this unit twice before. In both cases, he had withdrawn early in the semester. Through a short email, I asked him if he would like to meet to discuss how he could finish this unit. His response was short, “Yes, please”. During

our meetings, Student M mentioned a number of reasons why he had withdrawn from this unit in the past, including a perceived inability to stand in front of peers and present a planned message. He also reported issues in other units that included oral presentations for assessment. Student M recounted that on one occasion he had been told that if he turned up and "said something", he would pass the unit. He added, "I didn't see the point in doing that". I met with Student M three times during the semester to work on strategies to enable him to complete *Strategic Speech Communication*. He passed the unit. In a final email he said the experience had helped him to feel "less fearful" about speaking in front of others.

In general, this unit receives positive student feedback. (Refer Appendix B for feedback summary.) However, the following comment shows that, for some students, the experience is negative:

> Doing this subject resulted in my actually having to take prescribed medication after discussion with a doctor which is ridiculous and shouldn't be necessary. I think more consideration and awareness of people having difficulties would be good. (Insight student survey, 2017)

In my six years as Unit Coordinator, this is the first time that a student has mentioned needing to take medication because of this unit. An anonymous feedback survey at the end of semester does not provide right of reply. However, it is a troubling comment and the last line certainly fits with this research. With 244 students enrolled at one time, recognising and accommodating individual differences in relation to PSA can be challenging in one semester of study.

Some students enter *Strategic Speech Communication* as proficient speakers. Therefore, an adaptable learning environment is needed to cater for a range of different abilities, feelings and thoughts connected to public speaking. Providing recurrent opportunities to speak in a supportive space is a recommended way of reducing PSA symptoms. In *Strategic Speech Communication*, this type of repeated exposure is coupled with instruction. In particular, the activities across the Weeks 4 to 6 tutorials are designed to increase between-session habituation through self, peer and tutor feedback. However, while students are afforded some opportunity to reflect on feedback (through the Week 6 planning guide), more could be done to encourage self-reflection from week to week.

In addition to recorded lectures, there are a number of video resources available for students in this unit (covering the formative speaking task, assessment expectations and how to speak in an extemporaneous manner). While these recordings can be accessed at different times throughout the semester, tutorial activities are offered only once. This means that if a student misses a tutorial, they have missed the speaking tasks for that week. (Refer Appendix F for class attendance percentages across my three tutorials.) Finally, some students would benefit from additional opportunities to speak in front of others. However, the current delivery mode, specifically the allocation of time across a traditional semester of study, remains a practical barrier.

Weeks 7–8

Weeks 7 and 8 are assessment weeks. In a usual tutorial of 22 students, this means that 11 students present in Week 7 and the rest the following week. The set-up procedure has been publicised ahead of time. Students are asked to bring their slides on a USB and to load them to the desktop. At the same time, they place their name on a speaking roster while I set up

my laptop, ready to mark.[32] Before the first speaker starts, I ask all students to stand and take part in a short speaking exercise. From here, each speaker presents. A time call is given at five minutes and then again at seven minutes (through a raised hand). At the second time call, students know that they have around 15–20 seconds to come to a close. The emphasis is on finishing with impact rather than being told to stop talking.

Learning activities (planned tasks) / Uncertainty (about task and personal ability)

From Week 1, students are introduced to speaking a message with the assistance of prompts or hooks, which supports an extemporaneous mode of delivery. While the extemporaneous mode does not discount the use of notes, it does encourage a speaking outline rather than a script. This means developing points (and progressing a line of reasoning) that can be reduced to prompts. In addition, instructional material refers to the value of linking devices such as signposts, transitional statements, internal previews and summaries as a way of helping both speaker and listener to stay on track. In relation to using notes, students can either have a speaking outline close by, or elect to have their outline on a couple of post-card-sized pieces of card in their hand. Whichever they choose, the aim is to speak a planned message in the present rather than recite a script that has been written in the past.

As mentioned, the uncertainty of deciding on an exact word order 'in the moment' can contribute to nerves (Witt & Behnke, 2006) which can increase during an assessment piece. One way of assisting students with this uncertainty is to encourage a communication orientation rather than a performance one, which is the basis of Communication-Orientation Modification (COM) therapy (Motley, 2009). For example, if students become unsure of the message they are trying to make, they are encouraged to pause, check their outline, gather

[32] I find it easier to type comments. That way I can still look at the speaker while I type.

their thoughts and continue speaking with the help of a bridging statement such as, 'Another reason why this is important…' or 'Let me explain that a little more…'. These statements can also assist a student to finish with impact if they are running out of time to complete their presentation. For instance, they may say, 'The most important thing I want to leave you with today is …' or 'What I'm hoping you take away from this is …'. In addition, through lectures and tutorials, students are encouraged to reframe negative thoughts that may arise before a speaking task. To illustrate, they might change initial thoughts from 'I feel really nervous, I don't think I can do this' to 'I've got a right to be here, I have my speaking outline close by if I need it'. Providing such strategies ahead of time (with practical examples) may help students to better understand the task as well as feel more personally equipped to meet the demands of extemporaneous speaking.

Learning activities (assessment)

In both assessment weeks, I begin the tutorial with the same chant: *I am a calm and confident speaker*. Students repeat this sentence after me, one word at a time. While the overall aim is to establish a positive mindset and slow pace, it is also used to break the ice and lighten the mood in the room. At the conclusion of this group exercise, students speak the completed line to two other students. After each person has spoken, their partner responds with, 'Yes, you are'. Again, the idea is to imagine a positive speaking experience (visualisation) as well as foster mutual support. In the lead-up to this assessment task, students have been given many opportunities to stand and speak in front of their tutorial group (graduated exposure). However, a 40 per cent oral presentation can heighten situational variables, especially in terms of degree of attention/evaluation from others (Buss, 1980; McCroskey, 1984). Therefore, every effort should be made to make this experience as positive as possible.

I have been marking oral presentations for close to 20 years, mainly at university but also in secondary schools. It is fair to say that I have listened to over 1000 presentations during this time. Even with this experience, it is impossible to predict how an individual speaker will react and/or present on the day of delivery.[33] This connects to the more transitory nature of state PSA. Sometimes a student who has been confident and engaged in classroom activities does not present in the same manner during assessment times. Alternatively, a student who has seemed reluctant to participate may deliver in a dynamic manner. The following examples reflect three different student experiences during this assessment period.

Tutorial 1

Student N began her presentation hesitantly. She repeated key sentences and then stopped talking. I suggested that she might like to get a drink of water and either gather her thoughts outside or come back into the room. She elected to go outside and wait while the next couple of speakers presented. She delivered her talk at the end of class. In relation to her earlier attempt, she said, “I don’t know what happened, I just felt overwhelmed and didn’t know what to do”.

Tutorial 2

Student O presented her talk. The time limit is between five and seven minutes. Students are asked to aim for six minutes as it is a 40 per cent piece of assessment. Student O spoke for 4 minutes, 20 seconds. When she sat down at the conclusion of her talk, she slumped in the chair and shook her head. I spoke with her at the end of the tutorial. She was visibly upset

[33] In the PSA literature, ‘the moment of truth’ refers to the opening words of any oral presentation (Sawyer & Behnke, 2009).

and said that she had missed a huge chunk of her talk. “I started fine but then something happened in the middle,” she said.

Tutorial 3

Student P had indicated in a previous tutorial that he found giving a presentation a difficult task. For his major assessment piece, he gave a very good presentation. It was well planned in relation to matching speaker, audience and message. His message was memorable and persuasive.

Student N had attended all tutorials prior to her Week 7 presentation. She had actively participated in activities which required her to regularly stand and speak in front of her peers. Her topic choice was sound and she had clearly spent time preparing her presentation (as indicated by the planning guide submitted the week before). When her name was called, she activated her slides and moved to the speaking area. Up until that point, there were no behavioural indications that she was feeling anxious. It was only when she started to speak that her distress became evident. Whether or not Student N experienced a panic attack, she exhibited signs of being physically unable to continue her presentation. At the time, my immediate concern related to her safety and wellbeing. As Behnke and Sawyer (2004) state, “adjusting to the initial confrontation with an audience is, by far, the most challenging moment of the public speaking experience for most people” (p. 171).

For some speakers, initial feelings of unease are not substantiated resulting in a lessening of anxiety (habituation). However, for other speakers the task can become more stressful which can elevate reactivity (sensitisation). Finn, Sawyer, and Behnke (2009b) highlight a difference between anxious apprehension or worry, and anxious arousal or panic. These authors also equate apprehension or worry to a cognitive response, while they link anxious

arousal or panic to a physiological response. As would be expected, assessment tasks can heighten a fear of evaluation. However, these tasks also relate to other situational factors such as formality (under assessment conditions), subordinate status (the tutor is writing comments as the student speaks) and even dissimilarity (in comparison to other speakers). Therefore, in meeting stated learning outcomes (such as demonstrating and presenting material in a professional and persuasive manner), the potential for PSA must be acknowledged across all learning opportunities including in-class activities and assessment items.

Broader issues / Individual differences

Information about the two major assessment tasks in *Strategic Speech Communication* is available online from Week 1. Additionally, the tutorial activities in the first six tutorials are planned to build understanding of the first assessment task (major oral presentation) as well as to provide practical ways of meeting the stated criteria. This aligns with key recommendations from QUT's Manual of Policy and Procedures (MOPP) that assessment practices must be "fair, equitable and inclusive and clearly communicated to students" (QUT, 2017b). However, does fair and equitable mean that the same procedure needs to be applied to all students? This is a complicated question in light of PSA research that details the individual nature of this phenomenon.

As mentioned, at the beginning of any semester, I often receive disability plans about why an individual student may find this unit difficult.[34] These plans also provide recommendations concerning how an assessment piece could be modified, for instance, an extension of time or being able to present to the tutor only. Eligibility for a disability plan necessitates some

[34] Reasons have included anxiety, depression and panic disorders.

documentation, often from a medical practitioner. For students with a diagnosed condition, this process appears to work well as it means they are not required to meet with each Unit Coordinator separately, which could compound feelings of anxiety. While PSA may be part of a more encompassing social anxiety disorder, it may not be. That is, a student may be highly anxious about speaking in front of others but not have any diagnosed condition requiring special consideration. For example, in one tutorial group, a student who identifies as high trait PSA (as indicated by a PRPSA score of 120 or above) may be sitting next to another student who identifies as low trait PSA (as indicated by a PRPSA score of 84 or below). Indeed, some students have indicated an extremely high PRPSA score (for instance 160). However, such self-report measures are not seen to qualify as official documentation.

The immediacy of a live presentation makes this type of assessment problematic in relation to extensions. As part of QUT's MOPP, the following information is provided concerning late assessment:

> Assessment work submitted after the due date will be marked only with an approved extension (E/6.8.2). Assessment work submitted after the due date without an approved extension or, where an extension has been granted, after the extended due date, will normally not be marked and a grade of 1 or 0% will be awarded against the assessment item. (QUT, 2017b)

Students who are unable to present on a specific day are covered in this statement. They, too, must apply for an official extension. However, what about students who turn up ready to present but find the experience overwhelming? What about students, such as Student N, who start their presentation and then stop? How can the need to recognise individual differences in relation to speaking in front of others support the need for fair, consistent and rigorous

assessment demands? The PSA literature outlines two interrelated approaches to dealing with individual differences: (1) offering specialised classes for highly anxious students or (2) screening students at the beginning of semester. At the university level, both of these come with limitations regarding budget, time restrictions and instructor expertise. For example, in relation to additional screening, while this may provide a more comprehensive speaker profile, it may not be possible for staff to offer extra support across one semester of study. Furthermore, self-report surveys usually indicate how a student 'generally feels' in relation to presenting in front of others rather than at a specific moment in time. For instance, in a previous semester, a student self-identified as low trait anxious (with a PRPSA score of 58); however, he struggled to get through both oral assessment pieces. Again, this highlights the complexity of PSA in terms of how it is experienced, how it is observed and how it can be managed. The current use of the PRPSA in *Strategic Speech Communication* is to provide tutors with a general understanding of student experiences and expectations in relation to public speaking. Yet, scoring the PRPSA is time-consuming. While online versions and automatic scoring could assist with this, the overall usefulness of this survey, in relation to providing practical support, may need to be reconsidered in this unit.

Policy considerations in relation to oral presentations for assessment need to reflect a pragmatic and compassionate approach (Sawyer, 2016). At the time of this study, I was unable to locate specific policy advice regarding live oral presentations for assessment. Currently, if a student appears to be experiencing substantial difficulty getting through an oral presentation for assessment then two things can happen. First, the student can stop speaking (as with Student N) and second, the tutor can ask the student to stop speaking. The latter can be a more obvious decision when a tutor believes that the student may be in danger of hurting themselves (for example, I have asked students to take a seat because I was worried about their welfare). However, at other times, it can be more difficult to make that decision. Some

students start shakily but go on to complete their presentation, while other students need some form of intervention which equates to the SCT concept of proxy agency and relying on someone else to help manage a situation (Bandura, 2001).

In this unit, students often make reference to past speaking experiences and past speaking instruction. The latter can involve a myriad of ideas or recommendations surrounding 'effective speaking' that reflect different attitudes about this type of assessment. The following comments were collected informally from students, colleagues and online teaching forums as part of my reflective journal (refer Appendix G for an expanded list). They are presented here to acknowledge the range of opinions on offer in relation to oral presentations in an educational setting:

1. Marks should be deducted if presenting to fewer people. For example, small group, lose 10 per cent; teacher only, lose 20 per cent.

2. Preparation is the key to giving a confident oral presentation. If students are well prepared, they will be less nervous.

3. Students could use anxiety as an excuse for getting out of an assessment piece.

4. Giving too many 'special considerations' is not helpful, as the student will never learn how to deal with their presenting stress.

Whether or not marks could (or should) be deducted has wider policy implications (Comment 1). In addition, the final comment above appears to suggest that repeated opportunities to present in front of others will automatically lessen PSA, and that 'special

consideration' or too much support may prevent this from happening. This view fails to recognise the complex and individual nature of PSA, and instead promotes a one-sized-fits-all management option. Overall, these comments demonstrate that, across multiple units of study, there will be different advice, expectations and guidelines surrounding oral assessment tasks. In short, all units will not operate in the same manner as *Strategic Speech Communication*.

Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback has been identified as a key factor in effective learning and teaching, and is the subject of continued pedagogical advice. As mentioned, in *Strategic Speech Communication* there are ongoing and less formal opportunities for formative feedback during classroom activities. However, this study also acknowledges the important role of summative assessment feedback. Hattie and Yates (2014) have focused on the role of feedback in education:

> When we interview students on what they understand by feedback and why it is important to them, one theme emerges almost universally: they want to know how to improve their work so that they can do better next time. Students tend to be future focused, rather than dwelling on what they have done beforehand and left behind. (pp. 64–65)

The personal desire for feedback was evidenced in my study. Students want constructive feedback, which means providing suggestions for future tasks. As one previous student stated: "I received just good comments. What's the point? To get better you need to know what is wrong" (Pulse student survey, 2016). However, findings from my study do not support the assertion that students are solely "future focused" in relation to oral presentations

(Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 65). As numerous student conversations have highlighted, past speaking experiences are not always easy to leave behind. In fact, the memory and accompanying thoughts and feelings can travel from one speaking task to the next. Again, this underscores the unique nature of oral assessment as well as the potential longer-term impact of PSA.

I often ask students about the type of feedback they have received concerning their ability to speak a message. This question usually results in some reference to past oral assessment pieces. Sometimes this type of feedback is contained to written comments on a marking rubric, at other times spoken comments have been offered. In a previous semester, I met a student (Student Q) following her major oral presentation. I told her that she had given a very good presentation. She smiled and said: “So, you couldn’t tell that I had been throwing up in the bathroom before the presentation?” She then admitted that she felt the same way before any presentation. This came as a surprise to me and I told her so. We continued talking and I eventually asked her if she had any idea when this feeling had started. She spoke about an experience in her first year at university. At the conclusion of an oral presentation in one of her units, the tutor had asked her to stay in front of the class while she gave feedback. To the student, the tutor’s comments were not positive and included the line: “I am really not sure what you just said”. The student said that since that time, she always threw up before a presentation because she could remember what it was like “just standing there and being told these things”.

In addition to past teacher or tutor feedback, students have also mentioned previous audience reactions during assessment tasks. For example, at the end of the Week 7 tutorial, a student

(Student R) elected to stay behind to talk about the major oral presentation.[35] She became upset and admitted that she gets really nervous when speaking. She spoke about her school experiences and a specific English oral presentation where she could not get her words out coherently. She described the reaction of some audience members and how she can "still see them now". For this student, previous experiences had not been relegated to the past but affected present speaking tasks and, without intervention, could affect future tasks as well. A wide range of factors can influence the way a student responds to a speaking opportunity. Sometimes students can identify a reason why they may not have presented as effectively as they would have liked. Sometimes, the whole situation may have just felt overwhelming. Whatever the reason, some students may benefit from an opportunity to talk through the experience. Otherwise, feelings of distress or disappointment may remain or travel with the student to the next speaking task (Finn et al., 2009a).

Learning activities (assessment) / Feedback

With the major oral presentation, there are four marking elements:

1. Ability to critically apply ideas and concepts from lectures and tutorials to plan a persuasive oral presentation

2. Ability to orally present a planned message to an intended audience

3. Ability to engage an audience through vocal qualities using an extemporaneous mode of delivery

[35] Student R was scheduled to present her oral presentation in Week 8.

4. Ability to design and integrate visual aids as well as consideration of non-verbal communication to complement an oral message.

The thread that connects these four elements is audience. Grades for the major oral presentation are awarded via a Criterion-Referenced Assessment (CRA) sheet.[36] In addition, written feedback is provided. The usual process is to write notes during the actual presentation and then finalise comments and grades following moderation.[37] An advantage of using paper-based CRA sheets is that comments can be clarified on return to students (usually in Week 9). The following four interactions are from my three tutorials. While the class were engaged in an activity, I handed back the CRA sheets individually. This allowed for a brief conversation which included the following excerpts.

Student S: (Reading comment about being under time) You know I practised it a home and it was well over five minutes. I think nerves made me speed up.

Tutor: You were quite committed to your notes.

Student T: I know, I wasn't actually going to hold them but at the time I got too nervous.

Tutor: How are you feeling about your grade?

Student U: Not great, I thought I took on board what you said about using some language devices and how three is a good number of points to make.

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[36] Tutors indicate a specific achievement level across four marking elements by highlighting accompanying descriptors under five scoring bands – High Distinction, Distinction, Credit, Pass, Fail.

[37] Student presentations are not recorded in this unit. This raises an issue with moderation in terms of consistency across multiple tutorials. However, the decision has been made to avoid the added intrusion of a camera at oral assessment times. A detailed CRA sheet is provided along with discussions surrounding what constitutes a particular grade/descriptor.

Tutor: I don’t think you needed the A4 piece of paper. You didn’t look at it much.

Student V: I just get so nervous before speaking. It happens every time. It’s mainly at the beginning. I usually start to feel better when actually speaking.

Teaching conversations can clarify comments as well as provide possible strategies for future speaking opportunities. However, they also help to place the speaking task in context. While it is a graded piece, it should not define a student’s overall ability as a speaker. Assessment tasks, along with in-class activities, should build both skills and self-belief so that future endeavours are approached with realistic goals. Finally, blended learning initiatives in higher education have promoted the inclusion of both face-to-face and online learning opportunities for students. Technology has also influenced marking procedures. Semester 1, 2017 was the last time paper CRA sheets were handed back to students for the major oral presentation. In future, all grades and comments will be provided online. This means that students will need to contact their tutor for additional feedback if required.

It is not possible, or even helpful, to talk with all students following an oral presentation for assessment. First, tutor observations are limited to those students who seem visibly distressed. Second, some students experience increased levels of anxiety at the end of a speech, making it difficult to process any immediate feedback. Additionally, for longer-term oral communication proficiency, students must be able to learn from both positive and negative experiences. In a dedicated speech communication class, the task is to recognise when further support is necessary while at the same time promoting self-regulatory practices.

Weeks 9–13

The three learning objectives in *Strategic Speech Communication* relate to creating and analysing oral messages. This supports an understanding that effective communicators are engaging presenters and discerning listeners. The same rhetorical tools and concepts are used to explore both ideas. From Week 9, the lectures and tutorials focus on analysis. A number of video examples are used to investigate the choices a speaker makes when constructing a message. The final piece of assessment is divided into two parts: a three-minute oral analysis of a movie speech (worth 10 per cent) and a 1500-word written rhetorical analysis of a more high-profile speech[38] (worth 40 per cent). In Week 9, students work in small groups to discuss a speech of historical significance. This activity is planned to link with the written rhetorical analysis. In Week 10, an example movie speech is given. Again, students work in small groups to analyse the speech, but this time one student from each group is encouraged to deliver a short presentation to the class. The example structure for this in-class activity is the same as the assessment task:

1. Introduce movie and plot (briefly)
2. Identify the speech
3. Highlight key considerations that led the speaker to make certain choices
4. Provide some examples (e.g. related to structure, language, delivery)
5. Comment on overall effectiveness of speech.

[38] A new speech is chosen each semester. The criteria for inclusion are that it must have been delivered within the last 12 months and be readily available online. Past examples include US President Barack Obama delivering a eulogy for Nelson Mandela, and activist *Malala* Yousafzai addressing the Canadian Parliament.

Learning activities (assessment) / Individual differences

The Week 11[39] tutorial provides an opportunity for students to finish this unit with an oral presentation – an assessed analysis of a movie speech. Students' chosen movie speeches are negotiated with tutors in the Weeks 9 and 10 tutorials. Many movies include an extended speaking opportunity which is the definition of 'speech' for this assessment piece. For some students, the final oral presentation in Week 11 is a relatively simple task. However, for others it presents challenges. The ability to speak a simple and succinct message, in a three-minute presentation format, is a specific skill. Furthermore, the end of semester brings competing assessment demands across many units. As mentioned, this final presentation is worth 10 per cent. The following examples are from two of my tutorials.

Tutorial 2

Student W got up to present her three-minute final oral presentation. She spoke for about 20 seconds and then stopped speaking. She did not move but just stayed silent. After a brief conversation, she elected to wait outside and present to me at the end of the tutorial. When she came back in, the rest of the class had left. She told me that as other students had walked past her, they had been very supportive with comments such as, "You can do this", "We all feel like that at times", and "It will be over soon, hope all goes well". She seemed surprised but happy with the number of people who had said something to her. I asked her if she felt ready to present to me. She said that she still felt nervous and a bit shaky. I suggested that she spoke her message while sitting down. She spoke for 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

[39] Week 11 is the final tutorial. The final lecture is in Week 13 where the speech for the rhetorical analysis is shown.

Tutorial 3

Student X started with a recognisable line from a movie. He spoke this line dramatically and the class reacted positively. After that line, he became quite hesitant. He had obviously prepared his talk and had good content. However, he appeared to get more nervous as the talk progressed and his speech became less fluent. Following this tutorial, I had a chance meeting with another student (Student Y) at the bus stop. She looked at me, burst into tears and said: "I'm sorry my speech was so bad". We spoke briefly and I told her that, while it had been a little long, she had covered some important points and had obviously spent time preparing her talk. I also told her that she had passed this piece of assessment.

All three students reacted differently. While Student W withdrew, Student X elected to keep speaking. My observation of Student X is based on behavioural signs of recognised manifestations of anxiety such as rigidity, disfluency and agitation (Finn, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2003). While I was able to talk with Student W after class, Student X did not stay behind.[40] Meantime, Student Y did not appear distressed during or immediately after her talk, again suggesting that internal feelings and thoughts may differ from external behaviour. However, it also highlights that students may experience "greater [and more negative] after-effects" when a speaking opportunity does not go to plan (Harris et al., 2006). These three examples reinforce the immediate and dynamic nature of oral communication.

[40] It did not seem appropriate to contact Student W. I am mindful that any message of support could also be interpreted as confirmation that his speech had not gone well.

As this is the last speaking task of the unit, students are encouraged to speak a message rather than recite or read a script. As mentioned, other demands can compromise preparation time, which can impact delivery. For some students, this means reverting to a script while, for others, an attempt to embrace the extemporaneous mode may prove difficult. As one student said: “I had some hooks, Lesley, but just nothing to hang on them” (Student Z). There is limited time to debrief after this activity. Comments and a grade are available online within a week of presenting. It is hoped that students view this activity as another opportunity to speak and learn from the experience. However, in light of the above examples, it is important to consider what some students might take away from this final task and how it contributes to future speaking opportunities.

Reflections on key findings

My original research aim was to explore how PSA is recognised and experienced in an undergraduate oral communication unit at QUT. As an experienced speech communication practitioner, I was still surprised that what I saw (external indicators of PSA) and how students felt (internal indicators of PSA) were not always synchronised. Employing an instrumental case study allowed me to critically reflect on this phenomenon across one semester of study. Informed by an extensive review of the extant literature, this type of study allowed for an iterative approach to meaning making (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). This section offers my “final compilation” (Stake, 1995, p. 77) of findings from Project 1 before embarking on Project 2. My first two research questions guide the opening discussion concerning what previously unexamined aspects of PSA can be understood through this instrumental case study, and whether current learning opportunities in *Strategic Speech Communication* address PSA at the unit, class and individual level.

Overall, Project 1 confirms that PSA is complex, prevalent, individual and unstable. The prevalence of PSA is well recorded. Survey results that suggest 70 per cent of students[41] register moderately high to high degrees of PSA reinforce the pervasiveness of this phenomenon (Richmond & McCroskey, 1989; Richmond et al., 2013). This type of population statistic leads to general understanding that PSA is a normal occurrence. While some speakers may gain comfort from knowing that they are not alone in feeling anxious, an overreliance on the collective experience of PSA can conceal the individual experience in terms of how a speaker thinks, feels and behaves. Therefore, my research reveals that, when faced with large cohorts of students and a finite period of time, it is important for educators to consider that PSA is also complex (varying causes, manifestations and treatment options),

[41] As mentioned previously, this statistic is often extrapolated to include the general population.

individual (affecting speakers differently) and unstable (changing levels of anxiety within and between presentations). Although PSA has been well-researched and investigated, it remains unclear how such a multi-faceted phenomenon can be best supported in matters of learning and teaching. It is this gap which is the focus of my broader DCI research.

The depth and breadth of available scholarship surrounding PSA takes this research into deeper territory. This includes the potential causes of CA (nature, nurture, lack of skills), manifestations (psychological, physiological and behavioural) and what this means for potential management options. Furthermore, the "powerful interaction" between traits and states (McCroskey, 1984) adds to the complexity and instability of this phenomenon. For example, students may have differing levels of reactivity when faced with a speaking task. Significantly, a distinction is made between anxious apprehension (worry) and anxious arousal (panic). The latter, which can result in some form of panic attack, can have both immediate and longer-term ramifications (Finn et al., 2009b). Outside of such extreme reactions, a less favourable past experience can also form negative thoughts and feelings associated with speaking in front of others. As indicated in my case study report, these attitudes have the potential to travel with a student from one task to the next, limiting chances of building effective speaking skills.

Following the natural progression of *Strategic Speech Communication* across a semester of study (Weeks 1 to 13) emphasised the individual nature of this phenomenon. Students enter the unit with a variety of past experiences and current expectations, including different levels of PSA. Reference to this is made in the unit outline:

> This unit recognises that speaking in front of others can bring about varying feelings of unease. Tutorials are run in a safe and supportive environment. If you are

> experiencing difficulties, you are encouraged to speak to your tutor or Unit Coordinator. (2017)

Furthermore, during the first lecture students are encouraged to talk with the Unit Coordinator if they feel unsure of their ability to complete the first oral assessment piece. However, for students with high trait-like CA, initiating such a conversation may prove difficult. This reinforces the need for the unit to be set up and run in a safe and supportive manner. It also stresses the importance of tutorials and the relational support that a regular tutor can offer. In *Strategic Speech Communication*, students are involved in speaking activities from Week 1. A staged approach means that initial activities are planned to be less threatening (for example, speaking from a sitting position to one other person). Subsequent activities progress in a graduated manner in terms of apparent difficulty. For this to occur, speaking opportunities are regular but short. Perceived benefits of this approach are mentioned in student survey comments that refer to a 'positive classroom environment' and 'feeling more comfortable speaking in front of others'.

In-class activities are planned intentionally to increase confidence and lessen uncertainty (Witt & Behnke, 2006). This includes drawing on established structures (i.e., the PRE plan in Week 5) to organise and progress a message. As detailed in this study, the use of such 'hooks' can produce either a simple or advanced message. In relation to PSA, this type of activity echoes Kelly and Keaten's (2000) recommendation that more anxious students may require more guidance. While recognising the need for clear learning objectives and a detailed tutorial guide, my research also revealed the importance of unplanned learning opportunities. For example, in Week 2 an interactive vocal awareness workshop led to a conversation with one student about past experiences and current perceptions about speaking in front of others. As evidenced by this encounter, the way a student experiences PSA may

not always be apparent to others (including the tutor). It is not surprising that the best way to find out how a student feels about their ability to present a spoken message is to ask them (McCroskey, 1978). However, this recommendation is difficult to enact when faced with a finite period of time (one semester of study) and restricted face-to-face contact (weekly 1.5-hour tutorials). Furthermore, even in a speech communication unit, using existing surveys (i.e., PRPSA) to establish baselines of PSA is a time-consuming task that requires some level of expertise in administering, scoring and, most importantly, implementing any treatment options.

Overall, feedback in this unit supports broader research that suggests participating in a speaking unit can reduce feelings of anxiety (Duff et al., 2007; Hunter et al., 2014; Robinson, 1997) as reflected in the following end-of-semester student comments:

> As a strong, confident speaker already, I wanted to gain more experience presenting without notes and I have definitely achieved that. (Insight student survey, 2014)

> I absolutely hate public speaking but my tutor helped me become more confident and relaxed speaking in front of a group without lots of speaking notes. (Insight student survey, 2017)

> This unit taught me invaluable practical skills where I learnt to improve my public speaking skills to the point that I am no longer afraid or nervous to speak in front of an audience. In fact, I am energised by it now. (Insight student survey, 2017)

For some students, the structure of this unit provides necessary challenges and growth. However, this is not the same for all students and presents a possible limitation to how this

unit addresses PSA at an individual level. This observation comes from student comments that noted a need for additional opportunities to practice, receive feedback and monitor progress:

> I would have liked to get more immediate feedback while practising. The evaluation of Assignment 1 was very strict. I would have liked to have more practice to feel more confident before this assignment. (Insight student survey, 2015)

> I would have liked to have more of an individual focus rather than group activities during tutorials. Overall, I really enjoyed this unit. I think it would have been beneficial to have more speaking opportunities during tutorials. (Insight student survey, 2015)

> Good structure and nice with recorded lectures. It could also be nice to have recorded tutorials because we aren't really able to write down notes during tutorials. At the same time, it would also be an opportunity to listen to yourself presenting afterwards and hopefully learn from that. (Insight student survey, 2013)

While the current offering of *Strategic Speech Communication* recognises the potential impact of PSA, the above comments illustrate the difficulty of addressing this phenomenon at the unit, class and student level. From the student perspective, two issues that have arisen from this current study are time restrictions and processing. Time is a factor in relation to attendance, in-class instruction and the linear approach to learning and teaching across a traditional semester of study. As tutorial activities are planned to build on each other, if a student misses a tutorial then that particular learning opportunity is no longer available. Furthermore, a fixed period of time means that students are unable to revisit activities both

during class and once the tutorial has finished. This connects to processing, which is a major finding from Project 1. Public speaking is a fear-inducing activity for many. However, the level of fear is not equal. For some students, a sequence of planned activities over the course of one semester can "open up a whole new way of speaking that [they] had not thought about before" (Insight survey, 2017). For others, additional support, or time, may be necessary in order to reframe past experiences, acquire new skills and re-evaluate attitudes.

What has become apparent throughout this current study is that a narrow skills-based approach is not enough to manage PSA in a university setting. Instead, an extended version of skills training is favoured, which includes modelling, goal setting, in vivo practice and self-monitoring, as well as direct instruction and coaching (Glasser, 1981). This also challenges a common misconception surrounding skill development that suggests simply providing more opportunities to speak will produce better speakers. My research suggests that, in order to learn from each experience, there is a need for ongoing self-reflection. However, as evidenced by a number of conversations in my case study report, some students require additional support in order to unpack, and make sense of, past experiences. Crucially, the role of 'audience' in *Strategic Speech Communication* emerged as a major factor in this study. On the one hand, the presence of an audience intensified feelings of PSA which is in keeping with a phenomenon that is defined as "the fear of confronting an audience while speaking" (Sawyer & Behnke, 2009, p. 87). On the other hand, a supportive audience provided necessary reassurance during both in-class activities and assessment tasks. The role of the audience is often mentioned on student surveys as with: "I actually gained true and valuable insight into communication techniques [as well as] being a better audience member, a more confident speaker and more persuasive argument maker" (Insight student survey, 2017).

My third and final research question sought to investigate whether the current delivery mode of *Strategic Speech Communication* contributes to continued growth in the development of competent and confident speaking practices. In reading through my journal and subsequent case study report, there were numerous instances where students expressed personal satisfaction about what they had learnt or how they had delivered an oral presentation. In addition, through surveys, emails and informal conversations, students mentioned drawing on their experiences in this unit to assist with oral assessment in other units as well as job interviews and work-related presentations. However, while this unit receives positive student feedback (refer Appendix B), there are limitations in extracting a definitive answer to this research question from the available data, including findings from my case study report. Instead, as a practical output of Project 1, eight principles have been developed that provide initial guidance for educators when including oral presentations for assessment in a university context. They stem from the seven key learnings from my journal and subsequent case study report. Table 5 details how these learnings transformed to eight guiding principles that offer broader educational appeal.

Key learnings from Project 1	**Guiding principles**
Overall learning environment To ensure a welcoming environment where students can reflect on past experiences and participate in current activities in a safe and supportive manner.	1. Creating safe and supportive learning spaces
Individual student differences/responses To cater for individual differences including different thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with PSA	2. Recognising individual differences
Learning activities To build on previous experiences in an effort to progress overall skill development through both in-class activities and assessment tasks.	3. Providing planned and ongoing opportunities to speak 4. Unpacking instructional material

Interacting with others To encourage interaction with others as a way of 'normalising' PSA as well as recognising the essential role of audience in any speaking exchange.	5. Promoting interaction and discussion
Uncertainty To reduce uncertainty about both in-class activities and oral assessment pieces in relation to expectations surrounding the task and personal capability to complete the task.	6. Reducing uncertainty surrounding in-class activities and assessment items
Feedback To provide positive and constructive feedback to build competent and confident speaking practices. To acknowledge the role of past feedback in forming a student's current identity as a speaker.	7. Offering regular and constructive feedback
Broader issues To ensure all learning opportunities meet unit objectives within a semester of study as well as utilise additional university-wide support structures if necessary.	8. Working within policy considerations in a practical, compassionate and flexible manner

Table 5: Moving from key learnings to guiding classroom principles

Most importantly, these principles acknowledge that PSA is not only prevalent but also complex, individual and unstable. Instead of presenting a standard method of instructional support, they draw on key elements from exposure therapy, a recognised management option for PSA in a classroom setting (Finn et al., 2009a). In this environment, exposure therapy involves regular opportunities to speak in front of an audience and receive feedback in a safe and supportive manner (P1, P3 and P7). In addition, reference is made to providing and unpacking instructional material to construct a spoken message and deal with anxious thoughts, feelings and behaviours (P4). For example, *Strategic Speech Communication* promotes an integrated approach to content and delivery where the content is demonstrated through the spoken word (Chohan & Smith, 2007). It is for this reason that the

extemporaneous mode is encouraged as a way of supporting this connection and allowing students to speak a planned message in a more engaging manner. However, in the main, this is not the mode of delivery that students have been asked to use previously. Past student experiences appear to favour a manuscript or memorised approach, both of which can segment content and delivery demands (write a script first and then read it or commit it to memory). Therefore, students require instructional support in order to transition from one delivery mode to another.

The need to reduce uncertainty surrounding in-class speaking tasks and assessment pieces was emphasised in this study (P6). Reducing ambiguity may assist with situational variables such as novelty, formality, conspicuousness and unfamiliarity (Buss, 1980). Furthermore, clear and realistic guidelines around assessment expectations may minimise fears associated with negative evaluation. This study also acknowledges that speaking is a social experience. Observing and learning from others, including how peers experience PSA, can only be achieved through regular interaction and discussion (P5). Finally, these principles reflect that PSA can affect students differently (P2) and that both opportunities and challenges exist for educators when incorporating oral presentations for assessment with large cohorts of students (P8). Overall, these principles recognise that PSA is a multi-faceted phenomenon that can occur, or reoccur, at different times and levels of intensity throughout a speaker's lifetime. Therefore, developing competent and confident speaking practices is an ongoing process and includes the ability to learn from both positive and negative experiences.

A potential limitation of this research is that critical reflective practice relies on the researcher's observations and interpretations. However, I approached this research with an open mind and a genuine desire to understand PSA and, in turn, learn how to better support student speakers. In utilising an instrumental case study, the overall aim was to explore this

phenomenon rather than critique the effectiveness, or otherwise, of *Strategic Speech Communication.* To do this, I drew on an iterative approach to data analysis which included having an ongoing "conversation with the data" in light of my observations and the extant literature (Merriam, 2009, p. 176). In recognising the subjectivity of this approach from the outset, I employed a rigorous process of recording, considering and interpreting my observations (Stake, 1995). As with Stake (1995), "I defend [this approach] because I know no better way to make sense of the complexities of my case" (p. 77).

Another possible drawback of critical reflective practice is how readily outcomes can be generalised to other settings (Fook, 2008). This study investigated a phenomenon that affects many. For this reason, it is envisaged that key findings will add to current understanding of PSA in an educational setting. However, in relation to the above-mentioned eight principles, they are offered as foundational support for educators when including an oral assessment piece. Whether or not they are flexible enough to cater specifically for different unit outcomes, time restrictions and instructor expertise requires further examination. For example, principles 3 and 7 (providing planned and ongoing opportunities to speak and offering regular and constructive feedback) would require more thought in terms of how this could be achieved practically outside a designated speech communication unit.

Link to Project 2

This scholarly work represents Project 1 of a Doctor of Creative Industries (DCI) investigating PSA in higher education. Project 1 concludes that PSA is complex, prevalent, individual and unstable. It is the individual nature of PSA that has emerged as a significant pedagogical issue. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) provides a strong theoretical foundation to understand and respond to individual differences. In Project 1, SCT was introduced as

one explanation of why people experience PSA as well as a potential management strategy in that if certain fears are learnt then they can be unlearnt of relearnt (McCroskey, 2009). SCT was also used as an analytical lens for the study, assisting me to make sense of my findings in terms of recognition and experience of PSA in a first-year, university oral communication unit. Notably, it emerged that a central tenet of SCT, namely self-regulation, has practical implications for addressing such a multi-faceted phenomenon in an active learning environment. As Zimmerman (2002) states, this type of learning is more than "detailed knowledge of a skill" but "involves self-awareness, self-motivation, and behavioural skill to implement that knowledge appropriately" (p. 66). For this to occur, students need a realistic understanding of 'self as speaker' as well as a positive approach to self-evaluation. This involves fostering a sense of personal agency so that students can exercise some control over their learning (Bandura, 1986).

Based on an instrumental case study, situated in a university oral communication unit, Project 1 offers practical insights into teaching and learning strategies to address PSA. A pertinent issue raised by the study is how do classroom experiences transfer from one unit to the next and, more importantly, to work and life once a student has completed their university degree. What's more, setting up positive in-class speaking opportunities may boost feelings of confidence in the short-term; however, not all future speaking situations may be as constructive. As evident throughout my case study report, the individual nature of PSA means it is not possible to provide a one-sized-fits-all management response. In order to build sustainable speaking skills, it is essential to recognise the influence a student can have on their development, motivation and behaviour. This includes an opportunity to work on personal management strategies to address PSA in a safe and supportive setting. Utilising an SCT lens, Project 2 creates a framework for teachers, with equal attention to the learner's role, in supporting the development of public speaking knowledge, skills and self-belief.

These are the essential attributes to equip students to continue to grow as speakers from one speaking task to the next, including once a unit of study has finished.

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Appendix A

Excerpt from Strategic Speech Communication unit outline

Rationale

This unit emphasises both the theory and practice of speech and interpersonal communication. It introduces theories of language, rhetoric and persuasion, which are interrelated to promote understanding and development of your communication skills. Classroom practice in simulated work situations will enhance the leadership skills you need to become articulate presenters in a range of contexts including personal presentations.

Aim

The unit aims to develop in you:

1. An understanding of the theoretical concepts and practical application of rhetoric and interpersonal communication as an underpinning for effective and professional communication practices within the workplace.

2. The ability to be an articulate presenter, with a sense of self-awareness that allows for self-critique and continued growth.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate and present material in a professional and persuasive manner, both oral and written.

2. Discuss and analyse the rhetorical bases of persuasive speaking underpinning the choices a speaker makes in public presentations whether in a live situation or via the media.

3. Reflect on and appraise individual oral communication skills in both interpersonal and public contexts.

Appendix B

Student feedback (*Insight* survey) end-of-semester evaluation

Students can respond to three questions via a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). In addition, comments can be included. From Semester 1, 2013 to Semester 1, 2017, 405 students provided ratings and 197 included comments.

Year	Teaching Period	Total Surveyed	Total Responded	Question Text	Rating
2017	2017-SEM-1	245	59	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.3
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.1
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.3
	2017-SEM-2	112	32	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.5
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.3
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.5
2016	2016-SEM-1	225	79	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.4
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.3
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.3
	2016-SEM-2	108	18	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.8
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.8
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.8
2015	2015-SEM-1	240	71	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.4
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.3
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.4
	2015-SEM-2	107	37	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.6
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.6
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.6
2014	2014-SEM-1	277	58	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.1
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.0
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.0
	2014-SEM-2	116	31	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.5
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.2
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.4
2013	2013-SEM-1	210	32	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.4
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.2
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.1
	2013-SEM-2	93	20	This unit provided me with good learning opportunities. (IS1)	4.7
				I took advantage of the opportunities to learn in this unit. (IS2)	4.7
				Overall, I am satisfied with this unit. (IS3)	4.7

End-of-semester student feedback ratings (Insight survey)

	Positive comments about unit	**Positive comments about tutor**	**Constructive comments about content/procedure**	**Negative comments about content/procedure**
Number	165*	119*	30*	17*
Prevalent ideas	Practical, useful, safe, improved speaking/helped with confidence/ good feedback. (Usefulness of tutorials and activities in building confidence)	Helpful, engaging, supportive, good communicator	More speaking opportunities, different weighting of assessment items, more help with assessment, more feedback	Too difficult to get a 7, content outdated, boring, too many theories

Breakdown of end-of-semester student feedback comments (Insight)
**Some students provided more than one type of comment*

Appendix C

Excerpt from *Strategic Speech Communication* tutor guide

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Tutorial 1

Objectives

- Introduce the unit/Motivate students to attend tutorials
- Encourage students to speak in front of others
- Introduce **Week 3 formative speaking task** and major oral presentation

From the outset, we will be encouraging students to speak in front of the class. For many we are advocating a different manner of speaking (extemporaneous) from secondary school experiences (often memorised or manuscript). Remind students we will be offering ongoing feedback (in particular detailed feedback in Week 3) about their presentation style in the lead-up to their major oral presentation in weeks 7 & 8.

Autographs (10 minutes)

Use prepared handout. Students move around the room and introduce themselves to other students. They need to find different members of their tutorial group to sign each of the statements. See instructions on sheet. (To save time, I usually encourage them to find ten different signatures. It doesn't matter if they don't complete the sheet).

Introductions (30 minutes)

Students interview a partner for about 2–3 minutes each. They then introduce each other to the class with the knowledge they've gleaned from the interview. Ask them to interview each other without taking notes! If needed, you can give some guidelines/possible headings. For example: *'This is Sarah, it's her first year at uni. She's studying Media and Communication and travels from the coast each day. She actually finished school in 2011 and spent last year teaching English in China.'*

Link to unit: We are encouraging students to develop their critical thinking skills. A key component of this is the ability to ask questions. This is also related to active listening. Being able to ask and answer questions is not only important in interpersonal communication but also in planning for oral presentations. In future lectures, students will be provided with lots of different types of questions to get them thinking about preparing to speak; we will

</td><td>

Initial thoughts

Importance of attending to make the most of in-class activities

For many students, this is a big change. Nature of past oral presentations for assessment often includes writing a draft of the speech, having a teacher review that draft and then either memorising or reading from a script

Beginning with a more conversational style of speaking. Less threatening (with more than one person speaking at once.) Something concrete in hand (autograph sheet) provides a definite entry and exit point to speaking (asking questions, encouraging someone to sign a piece of paper before moving on to the next person)

Expanding on conversation (importance of listening). Providing a simple structure to follow in order to present ideas to rest of class

Extemporaneous mode seen as more conversational yet still planned. Approach encouraged in this unit

First chance to talk about self

</td></tr>
</table>

also draw on some overarching questions when critiquing speakers (as part of the rhetorical analysis). **Three things about me (20 minutes)** From personal possessions, students select three objects that in some way represent them and their current life. Objects may include car-keys, diary, QUT Student Card, library book, iPod, laptop, lecture notes, work schedule, etc. Each student explains why they have selected the three objects and what these objects 'say' about them.	Simple topical structure involving three ideas. Speaking from seat, not standing in front of class Relying on structures and also linking statements to move through a message
Link to unit: This is a good activity as it introduces the power of three (triad of emphasis). This number is often used in speaking as there is a natural cadence (musicality), e.g. I came, I saw, I conquered. This activity also introduces a simple topical structure – three main points. It also introduces linking statements, such as: 'That leads me to my next item…' or 'Another thing I always have in my bag is…' or 'the final thing I have is...'	Setting up student networks
Small groups Most students are happy to exchange an email address and / or mobile phone number with a couple of others in the class. This is a good thing to establish early on in the semester, so students can catch up on things they might miss or continue a discussion between tutorials.	Introducing formative assessment (Week 3). Providing links to support documents. Encouraging students to see this as an opportunity to speak and receive feedback before major presentation
Week 3 Formative speaking task In Week 3 students will have an opportunity to present a short, formative oral presentation based on a personal narrative. The aim is to provide feedback on their speaking / presentation style before the major oral assessment. To avoid confusion (and nerves) it would be good for tutors to model a short talk. The format is: introductory personal story, how this relates to 'my life' now and where to from here? (This mirrors a past/present/future structure and also emphasises the importance of an introduction, middle and conclusion). I have recorded an example and it is available on the **Unit Map / Week 2 / Assessment / Formative Speaking Task.**	Putting unit in context. Where to access material. Also, reiterating the role of audience in this unit
Brief discussion of unit overview and introduce first piece of assessment. All relevant information is in the 'getting started with KCB103' document available on BB but it would be good to show them the unit map under Learning Resources. It is essential that students are introduced to the first piece of assessment. The next five tutorials	

will specifically address presenting a meaningful oral message to a particular audience. At this stage, students should start thinking about a persuasive talk they may be required to give now or in the future. To get them started, there is an initial planning sheet under **Assessment / Assessment 1 / Oral Presentation Initial Planning.** Both the task sheet and CRA sheet are available on BB under Assessment 1. Also, there is an introductory video detailing assessment 1 on the **Unit Map / Week 1 / Learning Resources / Assessment**	Offering a short and structured opportunity for students to actually stand in front of the class and speak a message This activity is planned to find out more about past speaking experiences, future employment goals and overall levels of PSA
Final activity Each student to walk to front of room and finish the question: 'One thing you might not know about me is…'	
For next week (remind students) Students to complete the Oral Communication Self-Assessment and PRPSA available on BB at **Learning Resources / Unit Map / Preparation / Week 2.**	To enable tutors to contact students who miss a number of tutorials to check that they are OK
Admin Please keep a record of attendance. We do this in a supportive manner (and will email students to check on how they are going if they miss a few in a row).	

Appendix D

Example lecture slides

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

37 38

Lecture 3 Slides 2–10: Idea of timing. Relates to Kairos (opportune time) and exigence (moment in time when someone is compelled to speak out). Video example of Tony Blair – seen as effective speech but maybe not as eloquent. Why? Responds to audience needs/timing. Uses challenger shuttle disaster speech to identify five different audiences. Looks at language for oral delivery (pace/rate of speech). Provides an overview of tools and concepts discussed in first three lectures. Central message: No one 'right way' to speak a message – needs to fit with context /purpose/audience. Assessment matters: promotes assessment overview video (slide 33) and planning guide (slide 34). Looks at how to narrow focus of speech (slides 35–37). **(Providing early support material for the major oral presentation including written documents and videos)**

Appendix E

First Blackboard announcement for *Strategic Speech Communication*

Welcome to Strategic Speech Communication
Hello and welcome to KCB103 Strategic Speech Communication. We hope you enjoy this unit as much as we do. In this unit, lectures and tutorials begin in Week 1. Please check your timetable for tutorial times and rooms. (Also, make sure you have read the 'getting started with KCB103' document before the lecture, available on BB under Unit Details). If you have not enrolled in a tutorial as yet, please email Lesley at [email address] as soon as possible. Please note: It is very important that you attend the tutorials for this unit. The first six tutes are run in a workshop format. The aim is to get you prepared for your first major oral presentation in Weeks 7 and 8. We look forward to meeting you at the first lecture on Wednesday 1 March at 3pm in F-509. Remember, all tutorials in KCB103 begin in Week 1, which means a number of you will have your first tute before the first lecture.

Appendix F

Tutorial attendance percentages across three tutorials (Semester 1, 2017)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 (23)*	87%	83%	78%	78%	78%	78%	100	100	65%	78%	96%
2 (22)*	73%	91%	55%	59%	86%	59%	100	100	64%	59%	95%
3 (20)*	80%	85%	70%	90%	85%	75%	100	100	85%	90%	95%

* Number of students enrolled in each tutorial

Appendix G

Student, colleague and online teaching forum comments

These comments reflect a variety of opinions concerning oral communication and/or oral presentations for assessment. They were collected as part of a journal entry called *pondering perspectives.*

Oral communication is an important skill (listed on graduate capabilities).	Oral presentations provide opportunity for alternative and authentic assessment.	Oral presentations are just like any other assessment piece. The same rigor should apply.	Oral presentations for assessment do not need to be part of all units / areas of study. If it is not supported or taught in some way – it doesn't need to be assessed.	Students should not be penalised for being unable to confidently speak in front of others.
Most people experience some level of unease when speaking in front of others – it is a common phenomenon.	Oral presentations are one way to build confidence with oral communication.	Oral presentations should be staggered in terms of grades and requirements (as a way of increasing or building confidence).	Universities have systems in place to assist students who are unable to complete an assessment item.	For students with documented anxiety disorders, they can seek help through disability services.
Speaking is an important life skill and will be necessary in future employment, therefore universities should teach it.	If you let students have special consideration when presenting an oral presentation – then others will try to get it too.	Students can only have one chance to present. Otherwise it is not fair to other students.	Assessment conditions should be fair to all students. It is not fair to give some students special consideration for something like feeling nervous when speaking.	Some nerves are necessary when presenting a speech. These nerves actually help you to present better.
To be fair to all students, presenting orders should be done randomly, e.g. drawing names out of a hat.	If students are given 'special consideration' in relation to audience size, there needs to be some deduction in marks (e.g. if you present to a small group, you lose 10%, just the teacher, you lose 20%).	Preparation is the key to giving a confident oral presentation. If students are well prepared, they will be less nervous.	Students could use anxiety as an excuse for getting out of an assessment piece. .	It may be possible to provide different 'conditions' when delivering an oral presentation. For example, you could invite the student to present to a small group or just to the teacher.

In any class, you will have different levels of confidence in speaking. Some may love it, some may hate it.	Students should have some opportunity to practise speaking without being assigned marks. This could be formative assessment or just in-class activities.	There is always an option of having students record their presentations. This can save class time and can be less stressful for the presenter.	Some speakers like to go first so that they get it over and done with.	Giving too many 'special considerations' in relation to university oral presentations is not helpful, as the student will never learn how to deal with their stress.
Once a student starts speaking, anxiety usually diminishes.	One oral presentation in a semester of study is not enough to build skills.	Some students give an excellent presentation but report afterwards that they were feeling really nervous.	Students should be taught that presenting is just like having a conversation.	It is important that students don't try to memorise their speeches as this can actually make them more nervous (because of fear of forgetting).
If students are really anxious, they should be given an alternative piece of assessment (rather than an oral presentation).	Most students have had an opportunity to give oral presentations at secondary school. This type of assessment is more common these days.	Crippling PSA is usually part of a more general anxiety disorder and needs to be handled by professionals.	Assessment is assessment. Requirements are known in advance. If a student hasn't sought help for 'anxiety' then there is nothing that a particular unit of study can do.	Students should know that it is the content that is most important. Once they realise that, it takes the pressure off how they deliver it.
Some students, who are well prepared, lose their train of thought when actually standing in front of their peers.	Some students look physically uncomfortable when presenting an oral presentation for assessment.	Some students sound confident when they are presenting but their notes / hands can be shaking.	Students should be taught how to present before being asked to deliver an oral presentation for assessment.	For nervous speakers, it can be useful to provide a very clear template for them to follow.

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Research Project 2

Rethinking Public Speaking Anxiety: A new framework to support student speakers in higher education

Abstract

Effective oral communication plays a key role in our personal and professional lives. This is demonstrated by the importance placed on communication skills across the education continuum and in the workplace. At the university level, a common approach to teaching and assessing these skills is through prepared oral presentations. However, many students find this type of assessment particularly challenging. A key reason for this is the impact of Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA), defined as “a threat of negative evaluation or judgement” (Schlenker & Leary, 1982, p. 646). To support the development of competent and confident speaking practices, oral assessment items need to be carefully designed and fully supported.

As part of a professional doctorate, this paper reports on the second project of an extensive investigation into PSA, focusing on the context of higher education. It extends on key findings from Project 1, which consisted of a literature review and instrumental case study of teaching practices, to present the Sustainable Speaking Practices Framework (SSPF) to support educators who include oral presentations as part of assessment requirements. This new framework does not seek to eliminate or dissolve feelings associated with PSA. Instead, it acknowledges the impact of this phenomenon on students’ success at university and beyond, and offers practical guidance and strategies to build public speaking self-efficacy.

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Definition of key terms

BAS	Behavioural Activation System
BIS	Behavioural Inhibition System
CA	Communication Apprehension
CIF	Creative Industries Faculty
CRA	Criterion-Referenced Assessment
DCI	Doctor of Creative Industries
PSA	Public Speaking Anxiety
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SD	Systematic Desensitisation
SRL	Self-Regulated Learning
SSPF	Sustainable Speaking Practices Framework

Introduction

The ability to speak a competent and confident message, in a variety of contexts, is a highly desirable skill in education, employment and life. This is evident in the identification of university graduate capabilities where effective communication is regularly cited as a necessary employment skill (Curtin University, 2016; Deakin University, 2016; Griffith University, n.d.; Queensland University of Technology (QUT), 2017a). Despite the overarching recognition of the value of proficient speaking skills, there are differing approaches in how best to build such skills, especially within an educational setting. Some academic units include oral presentations as part of assessment requirements. Few teach students how to prepare for the oral component of these tasks. There is also no guarantee that engaging in isolated speaking activities from one semester to the next will build the knowledge, skills and self-belief required for ongoing development. A major complication is that public speaking is acknowledged as a fear-inducing activity that can invoke mild to severe feelings of anxiety (Bodie, 2010; Sawyer, 2016). This type of anxiety is non-discriminatory and is prevalent among both student and professional speakers. Therefore, Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) is a recognised problem in both professional and personal life. Consequently, any attempt to understand PSA is not confined to the student experience but can have life-long implications. It is for these reasons that continued research in this area is critical and a new support framework necessary.

My Doctor of Creative Industries (DCI) research consists of two connected projects. Project 1 took the form of an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) to investigate how PSA is recognised and experienced in a first-year, university oral communication unit, namely *Strategic Speech Communication.* In particular, critical reflection enabled a deeper understanding of this phenomenon in a natural setting over a semester of study. Project 2 is

my contribution to knowledge and practice. It translates the findings from Project 1, and years of personal teaching experience, to create a new framework to support both educators and students in higher education. As with the first project, Project 2 draws on three disciplines of academic literature (education, communication and psychology) to address the phenomenon of PSA. However, all material is filtered through an education lens.

Connecting Projects 1 and 2

Project 1 concluded that PSA is complex (varying causes and treatment options), prevalent (impacting large numbers of people), individual (affecting speakers differently) and unstable (changing levels of anxiety within and between presentations). This initial project led to the identification of eight principles (P) designed to assist educators to support the development of competent and confident speaking practices in higher education and beyond. (Refer Project 1 *Research design* (p. 31) and *Reflections on key findings* (p. 88) for a full explanation of how these principles developed).

P1 Creating safe and supportive learning spaces

P2 Recognising individual differences

P3 Providing planned and ongoing opportunities to speak

P4 Unpacking instructional material

P5 Promoting interaction and discussion

P6 Reducing uncertainty surrounding in-class activities and assessment items

P7 Offering regular and constructive feedback

P8 Working within policy considerations in a practical, compassionate and flexible manner.

While acknowledging the limitations of a single instrumental case study, Project 1 findings are likely to have implications for teaching and learning in other higher education contexts. This wider application connects my two projects but requires further clarification. Strategic Speech Communication is a specialised unit that does not reflect the way oral presentations are considered and/or supported in the majority of university units. For example, as part of this unit, lectures draw on theories that support effective speaking practices in an applied manner. Students are also given regular in-class opportunities to speak and receive feedback. However, my overall research focus is PSA rather than any one unit of study. This extends the pedagogical benefits of Project 2 as PSA is a phenomenon that affects many students in a variety of settings.

In matters of oral assessment, behavioural or external indicators are prioritised (i.e., what is observed during the final delivery of a presentation). However, to build confident and competent speaking practices, it is recommended that students are given multiple opportunities to present in front of others in order to reframe internal thoughts and feelings associated with this task. This is not the reality in the current higher education climate. Outside of assessment tasks, there is limited in-class time to engage with additional activities in order to come to new realisations and support emotional processing (Finn, Sawyer, & Schrodt, 2009). Within the constraints of higher education, there is a requirement to offer students more incidental, informal and/or formative speaking opportunities. To build student confidence and ability, these need to be based on the understanding of PSA as complex, prevalent, individual and unstable.

The Sustainable Speaking Practices Framework

Project 2 introduces the Sustainable Speaking Practices Framework (SSPF). This new framework comprises the above eight principles and provides a pedagogical foundation for supporting in-class oral presentations. In addition, the SSPF is informed by Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986), which was the theoretical framework for Project 1. At the core of SCT is the dynamic interaction between personal, behavioural and environmental factors. In matters of learning and teaching, SCT highlights the importance of self-regulation, self-reflection and self-efficacy. The SSPF applies these three constructs to support the development of ongoing self-management strategies in relation to PSA. The term 'sustainable' is important in the title of the framework. It recognises that each oral assessment experience can contribute to continued growth in this area.

The SSPF is based on the central belief that if oral assessment is utilised, it must be fully supported. This means going beyond the stated learning outcomes of any unit of study and considering more fundamental issues. First, oral assessment represents a student's level of achievement at a particular moment in time, rather than being a definitive marker of ability. Second, oral assessment is a learning opportunity that contributes to a speaker's sense of self. Third, numerous studies support the notion that speaking in front of others is a difficult task for many, with individual levels of discomfort ranging from mild to severe (Bodie, 2010; Richmond, Wrench, & McCroskey, 2013; Sawyer & Behnke, 2009). Therefore, educators must establish supportive learning spaces that recognise the overall complexity of PSA and how it can affect students both now and into the future.

Utilising the SSPF requires educators to adopt a student perspective. This includes opportunities for students to set goals of personal relevance, seek help when required,

monitor progress, and re-evaluate strategies in order to build from one learning experience to the next. Significantly, this places a renewed emphasis on the speaker, not in terms of making any communication exchange speaker-centred or discounting the essential role of a supportive environment, but rather in two important ways: (1) acknowledging the potential impact of PSA on an individual speaker in a variety of settings throughout their lifetime, and (2) inviting the speaker to take an active role in understanding and managing PSA for longer-term benefits. In detailing my approach to, and rationale for, the SSPF, this document is divided into four sections:

1. Rethinking Public Speaking Anxiety
2. Revising current support approaches
3. Developing public speaking self-efficacy
4. Providing practical guidance for educators and students.

Section 1, *Rethinking Public Speaking Anxiety,* reflects on current approaches to managing this phenomenon. In Section 2, *Revising current approaches to support*, the limitations of existing support practices are detailed and a new model put forward to guide learning and teaching. Key constructs that underpin the SSPF are further explored in Section 3, *Developing public speaking self-efficacy*. In the final section, *Providing practical guidance for educators*[1] *and students*, a toolkit of resources is offered. This includes translational resources (i.e., a series of videos and activities) developed to exemplify the various elements of this new framework. Overall, Section 4 represents the practical outcome of this DCI research and one approach of supporting oral presentations for assessment in a university context.

[1] In this framework, the term educator refers to someone who has responsibility for leading teaching and learning in a unit of study, which may include designing and implementing oral assessment tasks.

Rethinking Public Speaking Anxiety

Anxiety is part of life. It is defined as a "normal feeling people experience when faced with threat, danger, or when stressed" (Australian Government Department of Health, 2014, p. 1). However, when anxious thoughts, feelings or behaviours interfere with daily activities, it may be an indication of a more specific anxiety disorder.[2] From the outset, the SSPF recognises that oral assessment tasks may prove especially difficult for students with an existing anxiety condition. In such cases, it is recommended that educators connect with broader support structures, such as university counselling and/or disability services (Hunter, Westwick, & Haleta, 2014). However, PSA is a widespread phenomenon that can occur independently from other forms of anxiety, adversely affecting an individual's ability to engage in study, work or personal endeavours. It is this conception of PSA that drives the SSPF.

Over the last 50 years, communication scholars have explored the causes, manifestations and treatment options[3] related to Communication Apprehension (CA)[4] more broadly and PSA more specifically. Any pedagogical recommendations arising from the existing literature have been "motivated by compassion and pragmatism" (Sawyer, 2016, p. 417), which reflects the individual nature of this phenomenon and a genuine desire to support anxious speakers. In particular, the breadth of research mirrors the complexity of PSA and has provided much

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[2] The Australian Government Department of Health (2014) distinguishes between "feeling anxious appropriate to a situation and the symptoms of an anxiety disorder" (p. 1). It cites a number of anxiety disorders, including generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder, agoraphobia, specific phobia, social phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PSTD) and co-occurring mental health problems (pp. 1–3).

[3] In the main, the SSPF uses the word 'management' rather than 'treatment' to reflect an educational rather than clinical environment.

[4] As stated in Project 1, Communication Apprehension (CA) is defined as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) is generally seen as a sub-type of CA.

thought for educators in terms of why speaking in front of others is so feared and the best ways to deal with this phenomenon in a classroom setting.

Project 1 involved an extensive review of the international literature. In summary, PSA can be conceived as a more enduring (trait-like) anxiety or a more fleeting or situation-specific phenomenon (state anxiety) (McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2009). It can present in a mild, moderate or severe form and can impact thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Bodie, 2010). PSA can also occur in relation to a real or imagined speaking task; from the moment a speaking task is announced; or before, during or after the actual speech/presentation is given (Witt, Brown, Roberts, Weisel, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2006). In addition, there is ongoing debate surrounding what causes this type of anxiety (nature, nurture or lack of appropriate skills), which, in turn, influences possible management options (Sawyer, 2016).

Project 2 seeks to create a framework of broader educational appeal. To do this, the vast body of available research presents both opportunities and challenges. One of the opportunities is a more thorough understanding of how this type of anxiety affects the ability to speak a message. For example, with greater knowledge, educators can plan learning opportunities that recognise and respond to the scope of this phenomenon. Similarly, more informed students can approach speaking tasks more proactively, namely knowing some of the triggers that may affect their ability to present. Conversely, a challenge is that any support material must be moderated in relation to overall unit outcomes, approaches to learning and teaching, general time requirements and instructor expertise. Otherwise, there is a risk of overburdening both educators and students with material that is of little practical use.

Existing PSA management options

With a propensity for quantitative methods of research, numerous studies have confirmed that PSA is indeed a widespread phenomenon affecting both student and professional speakers (Bodie, 2010; Kelly & Keaten, 2000; Richmond, Wrench, & McCroskey, 2013; Sawyer, 2016). As suggested, the perceived cause or source of this type of communication-related anxiety will influence any management options.[5] For example, excessive physiological arousal may benefit from relaxation techniques combined with a form of Systematic Desensitisation (SD) or visualisation. This includes working through a series of real or imagined speaking tasks which gradually build in intensity, and monitoring levels of anxiety (Bodie, 2010). If unhelpful or intrusive thoughts are seen to impede a person's ability to speak a message, then some form of cognitive restructuring may prove more useful. In particular, Motley (2009) suggests considering public speaking as a communication exchange rather than a performance, which challenges the unrealistic goal of committing an entire script to memory. Another approach is skills-based training, with skills defined as both a cause of PSA (when skills are absent) and a potential management option (when skills are acquired) (Kelly & Keaten, 2009). The underlining proposition is that, in order to complete a speaking task, students need a practical understanding of necessary communication skills. However, according to some scholars, knowing what to do may not override how one feels, which casts doubt on the viability of skills training as a stand-alone option for managing PSA (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004).

Despite extensive research and many positive findings, a definitive method to alleviate or reduce PSA has not been found (Sawyer, 2016). In relation to matters of learning and

[5] A number of these treatment options emanate from the field of psychology and have been modified to deal with CA and PSA.

teaching, a more promising approach has involved a modified version of exposure therapy. As a psychological construct, this type of treatment involves controlled and ongoing interactions with a feared stimulus in a supportive environment. The benefits of this type of repeated exposure include the possibility of habituation (decreasing level of fear), extinction (a weakening of negative associations) and emotional processing (a strengthening of new, and more positive, associations) (American Psychological Association, 2019). The extant PSA literature along with the findings from Project 1 highlight the merit of multiple opportunities to present a message, specifically in relation to supporting habituation and emotional processing. For example, Finn et al. (2009) investigated how repeated opportunities to speak a message may contribute to the favoured pattern of habituation. As mentioned in Project 1, habituation occurs when initial fears are not met – such as when a speaker may anticipate the act of speaking as being a greater threat than what actually eventuates. The opposite pattern is sensitisation, where commencing a speech triggers more anxiety than originally thought (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004).

Drawing on Foa and Kozak's (1986) Emotional Processing Theory (EPT), Finn et al. (2009) addressed an ongoing concern in the communication literature surrounding the inability for some people to adapt to a potentially feared experience, such as public speaking. A proposed strength of EPT is the capacity to re-evaluate existing thoughts and feelings which may lead to new beliefs. These authors conclude:

> In general, then, EPT would suggest that speaker anxiety is associated with erroneous perceptions of the feared situation, including such things as exaggerated probability estimates of harm. … Conversely, if no negative consequences result during audience exposure, the speaker will revise erroneous or distorted beliefs about public speaking,

> leading to improved behaviors, cognitions, and emotions in future speaking situations. (p. 97)

Finn et al.'s (2009) summary reveals the advantages of exposure therapy and the potential to at least address, if not relieve, internal and external indicators of PSA. In particular, their work highlights the need for new information to be cognitively processed, which aligns with SCT.

The eight guiding principles that comprise the SSPF seek to promote the benefits of repeated opportunities to speak a message within safe and supportive learning spaces (P1), allowing for ongoing discussions including feedback conversations (P5, P7) and encouraging reflection through regular opportunities to speak (P3). In addition, broader instructional material (P4) can include strategies to assist students in rethinking and, potentially, reframing initial thoughts and feelings. Most importantly, this may help to reduce uncertainty about both task requirements and personal capability to deal with a perceived challenging situation (P2, P6). The SSPF also acknowledges broader contextual considerations including the opportunities and challenges of working within a higher education setting (P8).

As the SSPF is positioned for broader educational appeal, it is important that educators and students (from a variety of disciplines) feel comfortable with language choices to describe support mechanisms as well as accompanying activities. Therefore, instead of exposure therapy, the SSPF promotes the concept of purposeful practice[6] when referring to repeated opportunities to present a message. However, instead of simply rehearsing the same

[6] While acknowledging the value of 'guided exposure' in relation to PSA management, this research seeks to separate clinical treatment options from educational support mechanisms.

presentation (or script) over and over again, a more focused approach encourages students to engage with the whole speaking process in order to learn from each experience. This involves setting goals, monitoring progress and re-evaluating initial thoughts and feelings associated with a specific task. In order to meaningfully address PSA, this type of practice should trigger a level of PSA similar to the experience of speaking in front of an audience. In speech communication units, this is achieved through regular in-class opportunities to speak and receive feedback, where tasks are planned in a staggered manner (from less formal to more formal). However, outside of designated oral communication classes, it may be necessary to conceive and initiate such purposeful practice sessions in more creative ways.

As outlined in Project 1, this DCI research takes a multi-causal approach to CA and PSA. First, it acknowledges individual differences and that some students are more anxious than others when called upon to speak. However, it stops short of trying to delineate whether such broad traits are innate or learnt, favouring a combination of both. Second, it subscribes to Kelly and Keaten's (2000) view that if a student seeks support with PSA, then it should be offered. Instead of providing "brief interventions" (p. 53), these authors suggest a raft of measures to promote longer-term communication confidence. The SSPF incorporates some of their ideas but also focuses on a need to empower students to see value in developing sustainable speaking practices and look for ways to self-manage PSA. In recognising the individual nature of PSA, personal engagement (through self-evaluation and self-reflection) must be prioritised. This type of active involvement on behalf of the learner requires a more robust support structure than is currently on offer.

Revising current support approaches

In response to global knowledge economies and diverse and changing work contexts, universities are reimagining how best to support learners in the 21st century. QUT's Real World Learning 2020 Vision Statement (2017a) outlines a number of ways this is being approached. This statement references specific graduate attributes such as being curious, agile and resilient, as well as being effective collaborators and communicators (QUT, 2017a). This involves creating learning opportunities that value past knowledge and experience, providing a personalised and adaptable approach to ongoing learning needs, and supporting the development of professional profiles in order to meet the challenges of future work (QUT 2017a). In particular, quality higher education experiences should promote life-long learning (QUT, 2016). For those charged with teaching at university, the expectation is to create and facilitate learning experiences that contribute to these positive attributes.

Oral communication is a desired and required skill in both academia and the workplace. As mentioned, it is identified as part of graduate capabilities (Curtin University, 2016; Deakin University, 2016; Griffith University, n.d.; QUT, 2017a). For example, at QUT, the aspiration is that students will be effective collaborators and communicators (QUT, 2017a). However, a general understanding of proficiency in this area is not enough to meet specific industry demands. Each academic discipline must define what is meant by 'effective communication' in their field or sector.[7] In some units of study, there is a clear connection between in-class speaking opportunities and future work presentations – for example, law students taking part in a moot or student teachers facilitating a classroom lesson. In other units, speaking tasks are incorporated in relation to a likely situation – for example, many professionals will need to

[7] Meeting, advising and discussing legal requirements with clients and colleagues are mentioned as important communication skills in legal environments (Cantley-Smith, 2006) whereas persuading, explaining and training are three of 27 desired skills for accounting graduates (Gray & Murray, 2011).

pitch an idea or product to clients or colleagues. However, a possible work scenario is not always available or applicable and, in such instances, speaking tasks may revolve around students demonstrating their knowledge and application of unit content. In particular, the last two approaches may result in a one-off oral presentation for assessment where expectations for speaking a message are more general in nature. In these circumstances, support material may involve lists of common speaking tips which have either been designed specifically for a unit of study or imported from other sources.[8] There are challenges and limitations when such a generic approach to speaking is encouraged, as outlined below.

There is a wealth of information dating back thousands of years (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991) that provides advice to support students to present a clear and confident spoken message. Traditionally, a rhetorical approach to speaking[9] highlights the essential elements of context, purpose, speaker and audience when constructing any message. In particular, a strong focus on context (what surrounds the speaking task), purpose (what drives the speaking task) and audience (who is listening and why) is seen to promote overall engagement and connection between speaker, message and audience. Therefore, the five rhetorical elements[10] can be utilised in a variety of speaking situations. As outlined in Project 1, the strong ties between rhetoric and speech communication, specifically the central role of audience in any communication exchange, is acknowledged in this research. However, outside of designated speech communication classes, theoretical concepts associated with spoken messages may be less detailed, resulting in more prescriptive advice.

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[8] To help students deal with PSA, Deakin University has a link to an independent YouTube channel called *Study with Jess* http://www.deakin.edu.au/students/studying/study-support/academic-skills/oral-presentations.

[9] Foss, Foss, and Trapp (1991) suggest that Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric is the basis of the speech communication discipline.

[10] Context, purpose, speaker, audience and message.

For example, general support material regularly cites the following three-phased approach to speaking a prepared message:

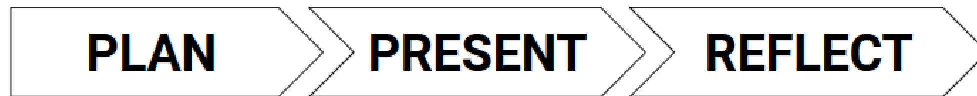


Figure 1: Three-phased approach for oral presentations

In this approach, thorough planning or preparation, which includes practice, is mentioned as a way of eliminating nerves when speaking. In addition, reflecting on past efforts is seen to benefit future efforts under two broad questions: *What worked well* and *what could be done differently next time?*

A simple linear progression such as this provides a way of considering a desired process. Overall, this supports a skills-based method of how to prepare for an oral presentation. However, the actual link between planning and presenting is not clear and, at times, contradictory. For example, planning requirements often refer to writing the presentation first, and then practising it. Yet, as part of delivery tips, students are actively discouraged from reading or memorising a script in favour of referring to dot points or prompts. So, when a speaker is encouraged to *practise, practise, practise,* what exactly are they practising? Furthermore, any tips relating to the actual delivery of the presentation appear to come at the end of the preparation phase, further segmenting the three phases. Such ambiguity over requirements could exacerbate feelings, thoughts and behaviours associated with PSA (Witt & Behnke, 2006).

The three components of Figure 1 can be formatted differently:

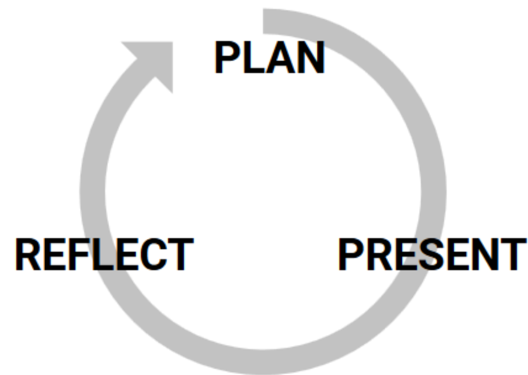


Figure 2: Cyclical three-phased approach for oral presentations

This representation of the three-phased approach to oral presentations changes the progression of 'plan, present, reflect' from linear to cyclical. There is perceived movement between each phase which could also imply development if given multiple opportunities to speak and learn from each experience. However, this movement can become stalled. Again, questions that need to be considered include: How are the three phases connected? What is understood by planning? What is the relationship between planning and presenting? What exactly is being reflected on? How can reflections assist future planning efforts? Additionally, because of time constraints and other assessment matters, there are often limited opportunities to present. A cyclical approach works best with momentum or repetition, especially in relation to incorporating any insights or reflections into the next planning stage. However, this is less likely to occur when speaking opportunities are infrequent, such as a one-off oral presentation during a semester of study.

PSA does not only affect novice or student speakers. An innate feeling of uneasiness, past negative speaking experience and/or a high-stakes speaking opportunity can lead many people to feel anxious when presenting in front of others. The ubiquitous nature of this

phenomenon has resulted in an abundance of literature surrounding PSA coming from both academic and non-academic sources. Furthermore, educational settings, including schools and universities, often draw on popular speaking maxims as a way of assisting students. For example:

1. Nervousness is normal – combat it by knowing your content and practising it. Convert what nervousness remains into enthusiasm and focus (Monash University, 2007).

2. Most people deal with nerves before a presentation, even professional speakers and performers. The trick is to be well prepared and rehearsed, smile and get in and do it (QUT, n.d.).

Such simple statements are offered as a way of creating a more positive mindset about a potentially difficult situation. However, they are geared to speakers experiencing mild forms of PSA. They also play into broader stereotypes, including the idea that some nerves are necessary if you want to deliver a good speech. In making such general claims, or relying on "folk wisdom" (Pelias, 1989), individual considerations can be missed. As Wilcox (2009) suggests "what is interpreted as excitement by one person is labelled as fear or apprehension by another" (p. 330). Therefore, suggesting that a speaker views fear in a positive manner may indeed 'convert nerves into enthusiasm' for some, while having the potential to trivialise the extent of anxiety experienced by others.

A new model to support learning and teaching

Numerous speaking resources follow a 'plan, present, reflect' progression of support for oral presentations. For example, Beebe and Beebe (2018) refer to a speechmaking process model which deals specifically with the first two phases of plan and present: "select and narrow topic; determine purpose; develop central idea; generate main ideas; gather supporting material; organise speech; rehearse speech; [and] deliver speech" (p. 17). Specifically, Beebe and Beebe's (2018) eight-part model places 'rehearsing the speech' (step 7) just before 'delivering the speech' (step 8). As PSA is recognised as a fear of speaking in front of others, Project 1 findings challenge the reasoning behind delaying the oral component of the task to the end of the planning phase.

The SSPF offers a new *integrated model for oral presentations* informed by theory and critical reflection on teaching practice, and offering educators and students practical guidance and strategies to address PSA (refer Figure 3). Specifically, it privileges the spoken word as a way of acknowledging the potential impact of PSA from the moment an oral assessment task is announced. Key elements of context, purpose and audience are considered throughout the planning process. In addition, essential critical thinking skills (for example, evaluating, adapting and synthesising material) are prioritised. Finally, the overall message includes reference to structure and language in order to progress a line of reasoning for oral delivery. Intersecting components highlight the dynamic nature of this type of communication and a necessary overlap between the three phases of *consider, discuss* and *construct*. Furthermore, it recognises the importance of making choices based on each unique speaking opportunity.

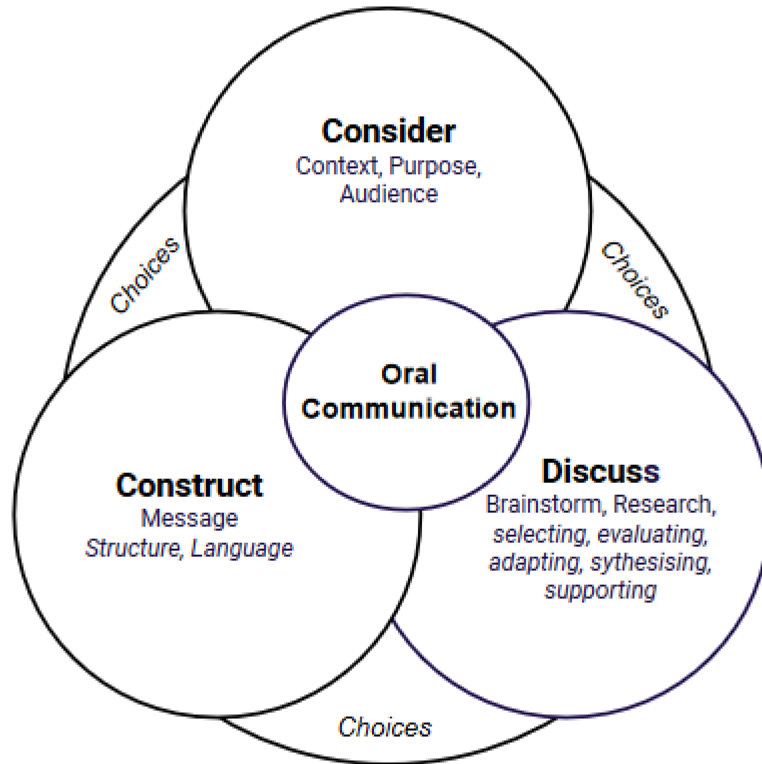


Figure 3: Integrated model for oral presentations

Most importantly, a distinction is made with the placement of oral communication in the centre of this model. In short, the spoken word is considered at all times throughout the process and is also reflected in the choice of headings. This does not discount the use of written documents (i.e., mind maps, research notes, preparation/speaking outlines or prompts), but recommends that they are developed with the oral nature of the task in mind. This differs from simply writing speeches and then practising them, which privileges written language choices. Drawing on the work of Chohan and Smith (2007), it also connects to matters of oral assessment where students are evaluated on their ability to present an argument through speech rather than just the written word.

The *integrated model for oral presentations* includes, or has provision to include, many steps mentioned in previous speechmaking models. For example, developing and generating ideas relates to the *discussion* phase, whereas organising the speech is part of *construction*.
As this new model considers content and delivery demands simultaneously, there is potential to review common concerns about this type of assessment from the outset. For example, as part of my Project 1 reflective journal, when first-year university students were asked what they feared most about an upcoming presentation, comments included: 'not being fluent', 'forgetting what I want to say', 'losing my place', 'making a mistake', 'stumbling or tripping over words', 'sounding stupid', 'speaking too fast', and 'saying the wrong thing'. One way of interpreting these comments is that they refer to a desired ability to speak a connected message. Instead of relegating such demands to the final stages of preparation, this model identifies 'speaking out loud' as an important planning strategy. This promotes oral brainstorming with repeated opportunities to articulate a point. It also encourages speakers to consider what certain words or combinations of words 'sound like' or even 'feel like' to say. In this way, students are encouraged to reassess spoken language choices ahead of final delivery. Finally, this model offers prompts (or shared language) to talk through planning demands with others. Through either face-to-face or mediated discussions, students can address contextual or audience requirements, consider the overall purpose for speaking, brainstorm initial ideas and possible research opportunities, evaluate supporting material and disclose any perceived concerns or queries.

Although the audience may indeed be the end and object of the speech (Aristotle, trans. 2012), it is the inevitable presence of an audience that can trigger PSA (Sawyer & Behnke, 2009). In terms of providing any instructional assistance, separating planning and presenting demands is unhelpful as the speaking component of the task is known from the outset. A

further challenge is that PSA can manifest differently for individual speakers in relation to intensity and timing. Therefore, the complexity of this phenomenon does not fit with a simple plan, present and reflect manner of instruction for all students. The *integrated model for oral presentations* provides an alternative viewpoint. It allows for multiple opportunities to speak a message throughout the planning process, which is a practical way of addressing a phenomenon that centres on a fear of speaking in front of others. In addition to providing instructional support, the ongoing development of communication competence and confidence requires active engagement on behalf of the learner. For this reason, the SSPF is strengthened by key SCT constructs of self-regulation and self-reflection to promote public speaking self-efficacy.

Developing public speaking self-efficacy

In Project 1, SCT (Bandura, 1986) was introduced to explain possible causes of PSA and to consider management options. Initially explored as part of the literature review, SCT connections were also made throughout the case study report and final reflections. Project 1 concluded with eight guiding principles informed by SCT, which are incorporated into the SSPF presented in Project 2. In addition, SCT highlights the importance of maintaining, building and evaluating speaking skills throughout a speaker's lifetime. In supporting the development of such proactive practices, key tenets from SCT underpin the design and practical application of the SSPF framework.

As mentioned previously, SCT recognises an important interplay between personal, behavioural and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986; 2012). This reciprocity allows students to be both products and producers of their experiences and supports an active rather than passive approach to learning (Bandura, 1977; 1986). In particular, it is Bandura's research into personal agency that has resonated with this DCI research and the need for a new framework of support. An agentic perspective highlights the influence an individual can have on their own development, motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 2001). As PSA can manifest as a perceived lack of control, a focus on personal agency has guided the development of the SSPF.

In defining agency, Bandura (2006) presents four key properties: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflection. These properties go deeper than just asking students to plan, present and reflect. As Bandura (2006) states:

> People are not only agents of action. They are self-examiners of their own functioning. Through functional self-awareness, they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, the meaning of their pursuits, and make corrective adjustments if necessary. (p. 165)

This level of self-awareness requires time and effort on behalf of the learner. However, it does not discount the importance of some type of instruction or direction. Specifically, SCT recognises the importance of establishing a supportive classroom environment to enable students to exercise some control over their learning. It also offers strategies that can be used once the classroom experience has finished.

Self-Regulated Learning

Two constructs that influence personal agency are self-regulation and self-efficacy. Within an SCT context, Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) is a "self-directive process" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). In addition to important metacognitive processes[11] (such as planning, monitoring and evaluating efforts), SRL addresses essential motivational factors (Zimmerman, 2001). This is a vital consideration. Providing resources is of little value unless they are seen to be personally relevant and accessible for students. From an SRL perspective, motivation includes self-efficacy beliefs (personal evaluation of capability), outcome expectations (anticipated consequences of completing a task) and perceived task value (intrinsic interest or perception of relevance). In addition, a sense of capability, apparent

[11] Whitebread and Pino Pasternak (2010) make a distinction between self-regulation and metacognition as thus: "that metacognition refers specifically to the monitoring and control of cognition, while self-regulation refers to the monitoring and control of all aspects of human functioning, including emotional, social, and motivational aspects" (p. 693).

significance and interest does not override the need for specific skills. While accepting the potential influence of all four motivational factors, self-efficacy beliefs are privileged when dealing with PSA (and will be discussed shortly).

Self-Regulated Learning provides specific ways for students to actively engage in the learning process (Zimmerman, 2002). This includes an understanding of subject, task, context and learning strategies, as well as personal factors that could influence a student's perceived capability or interest to complete a task. Further to empowering students to be more proactive, SRL also acknowledges the importance of providing flexible and diverse support structures. The latter relates to individual differences and recognises that some students need more support than others. It is for these reasons that SRL is a suitable platform to understand PSA in a learning environment. Specifically, SRL encourages students to monitor cognitions, emotions and behaviour, which are also frequently mentioned in the PSA literature as key manifestations of this phenomenon.

Models of Self-Regulated Learning

A number of theoretical SRL models (Boekaerts, 1991; Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000) have been advanced to support students at different 'developmental stages' and 'educational levels' (Panadero, 2017). The SSPF draws on Zimmerman's (2000) model as it promotes active involvement on behalf of both students and educators.[12] Zimmerman's original model[13] identified three phases which were: forethought, performance and reflection (refer Figure 4). These phases are presented in a cyclical manner, suggesting that one phase

[12] Utilising Zimmerman's model (2000), Appendix A provides an alternative way of reframing a 'plan, present, reflect' approach to speaking. It offers a shared approach to language to assist in initiating conversations.

[13] While a series of sub-processes were provided with his first model, they were expanded on and embedded into each phase during later iterations (Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003; Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009).

influences the next. However, each phase is not a discrete entity that can only be accessed once. Important components and sub-components can be revisited and rethought for a more meaningful learning experience. In fact, Zimmerman (2000) refers to each phase as a series of processes:

> Forethought refers to influential processes that precede efforts to act and set the stage for it. Performance or volitional control involves processes that occur during motoric efforts and affect attention and action. Self-reflection involves processes that occur after performance efforts and influence a person's response to that experience. These self-reflections, in turn, influence forethought regarding subsequent motoric efforts – thus completing a self-regulatory cycle. (p. 16)

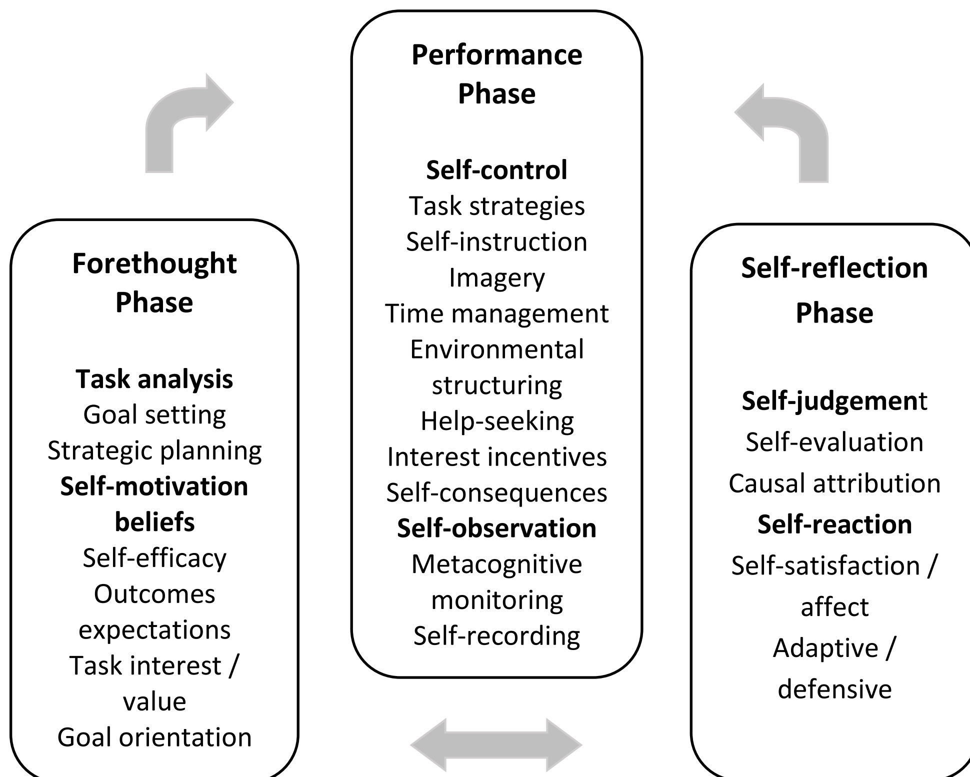


Figure 4: Model of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009)

The term ‘perform’, or ‘performance phase’, is not restricted to the actual oral presentation but rather deals with both preparation and delivery requirements. As part of SRL, the performance phase is sometimes referred to as ‘volitional control’ (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 16). This term provides a useful and alternative approach. First, PSA is seen to limit a speaker’s self-control, which is an area that SRL seeks to develop. Second, volition is linked with ‘making choices’ which requires active participation. Third, a more proactive approach to learning encourages self-monitoring at all stages of the learning process.

As discussed in Project 1, the development of effective speaking skills, and recognition of PSA, cannot be achieved in a static environment where opportunities to learn are presented in an isolated or linear manner. As a result, the SSPF embraces the cyclical nature of SRL in that certain ideas and/or resources can be explored at different times and in different ways to support learning. This fits with a more dynamic and interactive view of oral communication in general and recognises that any choices made must relate to situational demands (including context, purpose and audience). The importance of building capacity supports key recommendations from Project 1. Being able to self-regulate encourages students to recognise their own needs and any potential challenges that may interfere in the learning process. This also disrupts a ‘top-down’ approach to offering support where the ‘expert’ provides the necessary information to succeed. As PSA is a widespread phenomenon that can occur, or reoccur, at different times throughout a speaker’s lifetime, there is an ongoing need to exercise personal agency.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy for self-regulated learning is a much researched area in relation to overall academic achievement (Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007). Bandura (1986) defines self-

efficacy as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organise courses of actions required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 391). Such individual beliefs are powerful and are seen to be a better indicator of performance than actual ability (Pajares, 1996). For these reasons, building self-efficacy beliefs may be a more productive way of managing PSA rather than trying to decrease overall speaking anxiety (Dwyer & Fus, 2002). In addressing the individual nature of PSA, Bandura’s (1997) four proposed sources of self-efficacy are considered as part of the SSPF. These include mastery experiences (learning from doing), vicarious experiences (learning from observing others), verbal persuasion (learning from other’s feedback) and physiological conditions (learning from emotional states). Each source is discussed briefly below.

Mastery experiences are privileged when it comes to influencing self-efficacy beliefs as they offer “the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed” (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). In general terms, successful experiences enhance self-efficacy beliefs, while repeated failures weaken them. In relation to public speaking efficacy, mastery experiences are more than just final oral presentations for assessment. They include opportunities for students to work on specific areas or skills associated with speaking in front of others, in a graduated manner. In addition to being personally relevant, such direct learning experiences must provide enough of a challenge for students to develop a sense of accomplishment. This means incorporating speaking activities (either face-to-face or online) that include potential PSA triggers, in a safe and supportive manner (Finn et al., 2009). For example, students may be encouraged to speak from a seated position or in small groups before being asked to stand in front of the class (which acknowledges the potential impact of audience size and degree of conspicuousness). Even if a student has achieved a desired result, they may not believe they have the ability to repeat the process. As Pajares (2002) states,

“mastery experiences are only raw data, and many factors influence how such information is cognitively processed and affects an individual's self-appraisal” (para. 28). This also reflects the unstable nature of PSA and the way that different situations can evoke different feelings (Sawyer & Behnke, 2009). It highlights the role of mastery experiences in building self-efficacy beliefs, and how a positive sense of self is needed to work through potential set-backs.

Self-efficacy beliefs are also influenced through social models (Bandura, 2008). This connects with motivational factors where observing how someone else responds to a task can lead to new insights concerning how to approach a similar task. However, this is the not the same as merely copying someone else’s behaviour. As Bandura (2011) states, all information must be evaluated:

> Modeling involves abstracting the information conveyed by specific exemplars about the structure and the underlying principles governing the behavior rather than simply mimicking the specific exemplars … Once individuals learn the guiding principle, they can use it to generate new versions of the behavior that go beyond what they have seen or heard. (p. 52)

This supports active involvement on behalf of the learner in that observed strategies can be appraised, amended and adapted to new situations (Bandura, 2005). The ability to learn from others also recognises individual differences, and that some students may need extra support in order to internalise and make use of observed behaviour. Table 1 offers one way of conceptualising this support. For example, students with heightened PSA may benefit from watching someone present a short message via a simple structure (observation) and then

using the same structure to create their own message (emulation). Again, this relates to mastery experiences that include regular and ongoing opportunities to build speaking skills outside of assessment pieces.

Level	**Name**	**Description**
1	Observation	Vicarious induction of a skill from a proficient model
2	Emulation	Imitative performance of the general pattern or style of a model's skill with social assistance
3	Self-control	Independent display of the model's skill under structured conditions
4	Self-regulation	Adaptive use of skill across changing personal and environmental conditions

Table 1: Four-part model of self-regulatory competence (Schunk and Zimmerman, 1997)

Furthermore, modelled behaviour can also exhibit necessary coping strategies. In relation to peer-modelling, this can occur more naturally in a classroom environment where students are given regular opportunities to speak (as indicated in my Project 1 case study). However, educators also play an important role in modelling desired speaking behaviour, which may include sharing past speaking challenges and demonstrating ways of getting a message back on track. The inclusion of vicarious experiences and social models also extends the concept of agency. For example, educators can provide resources, opportunities and support structures to help students engage in a task, while interaction with peers can help to reinforce or revise certain strategies to meet a particular goal. In relation to high levels of PSA, this type of external influence (proxy agency) may mean the difference between persisting in the face of difficulty and avoiding the task altogether. The concept of collective agency relates to the communal nature of speaking. In short, public speaking is both a personal (speaker) and

social (audience) experience. An interactive environment supports both individual and shared goals through a mutually dependent approach to learning.

The third and fourth sources of self-efficacy refer to external and internal influences respectively. Verbal persuasion relates to feedback received from “significant others” (Bandura, 1997, p. 101). This type of feedback is of the highest pedagogical interest as it has the potential to strengthen or undermine learning effort. Positive and constructive comments can increase an individual’s belief in their ability to complete a task. Furthermore, it is not just the comments that are important but also how they are interpreted and used to inform future speaking opportunities. Finally, physiological conditions are a key consideration of this DCI research, as outlined previously. If students experience heightened levels of anxiety, it is unlikely that they will approach a speaking task in an efficacious manner. In relation to live oral presentations, all four sources of self-efficacy involve some form of social interaction. This includes physiological conditions because emotional states when speaking can arise because of the presence of an audience. Each source also affords opportunities to self-reflect, which have the potential to alter initial self-efficacy beliefs and, in turn, modify future behaviour.

Self-efficacy beliefs influence initial activity choice as well as overall effort and perseverance (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004). As Ritchie (2016) states:

> For those who consider their abilities to be predetermined, performance has negative connotations as it is an opportunity for them to face what they believe to be their limitations and threaten any positive self-beliefs they do hold. … Those who believe

> they are capable of increasing their ability levels as they pursue challenges and work towards mastery tend to have more solid self-efficacy beliefs. (pp. 31–32)[14]

Although this DCI research is based on a broader understanding of the term 'performance', there is still an actual presentation to give. As evidenced in the PSA literature, the thought of eventually standing in front of an audience looms large for some students. However, it can also affect the preparation phase. Highly anxious speakers may perceive the threat as so great that it interrupts any engagement with the task from inception. For these speakers, anxiety levels may remain heightened from the moment the task is announced to the concluding moments of the speech (a pattern known as sensitisation) (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004; Witt et al., 2006). This is a long time to remain apprehensive. Therefore, reference to 'predetermined ability' is not just confined to the actual presentation but includes all stages of the planning phase. Overall, although positive self-efficacy beliefs do not guarantee an effective presentation, they do contribute to effort, perseverance and resilience (Schunk, 1996; Pajares, 1996). These are necessary learning attributes to deal with PSA and build life-long speaking competency.

[14] This relates to mindset theory and how perceived intelligence and ability to learn can influence overall goal setting and planning. According to Dweck, Walton, and Cohen (2014), "goals can focus on performance (as a way of proving one's ability) or learning (as a way of improving one's ability). They refer to these as 'fixed mindset' and 'growth mindset' respectively".

Providing practical guidance for educators and students

In recognising that PSA is a multi-faceted phenomenon, the SSPF provides foundational support when designing and implementing oral presentations for assessment in any unit of academic study (refer Appendix B for an SSPF summary). In particular, it offers direction for educators in creating learning activities to support this type of assessment. This final section suggests ways the SSPF could be used to inform and develop these resources. To do this, Zimmerman's (2000) model of self-regulated learning has been reimagined under the following headings: *Understanding self and task* (forethought), *Learning through engagement* (performance) and *Responding to effort* (self-reflection). As mentioned, existing support material often involves lists of dot points that are more didactic in nature. The intention here is to go beyond the dot points and offer practical guidance for both educators and students.

The following section is not presented in a prescriptive or sequential manner where one idea or resource must necessarily follow the next. Instead, the ideas and resources support a process of discovery and interaction on behalf of both educators and students to evaluate potential relevance and significance. In guiding these approaches, the eight principles from Project 1 have been reviewed in light of key SCT constructs (refer Table 2). These connections will be explored explicitly under the three phases of *Understanding self and task*, *Learning through engagement* and *Responding to effort*. Accompanying each phase is a series of videos and resources created as part of this DCI research and used in two communication units at QUT.

	Guiding principles (Project 1)	Connection to SCT constructs
P1	Creating a safe and supportive environment	Acknowledging a dynamic interaction between environment, person and behaviour to support active learning
P2	Recognising individual differences	Supporting self-motivation, self-control, self-observation and self-reflection as a way of building self-efficacy beliefs of individual learners
P3	Providing ongoing and extended opportunities to speak	Ensuring opportunities to engage with mastery experiences (source of self-efficacy)
P4	Unpacking instructional material	Providing necessary support material to facilitate active learning. Developing self-regulatory competence through a planned and staggered approach to tasks
P5	Promoting interaction and discussion	Learning from others – through modelling and observation (source of self-efficacy). Recognising that speaking in front of others is both a personal and social experience
P6	Reducing uncertainty surrounding in-class activities and assessment items	Creating clear task guidelines (for task analysis) and opportunities to access additional advice and/or direction (help-seeking)
P7	Offering regular and constructive feedback	Encouraging ongoing feedback conversations including constructive comments from significant others as part of verbal persuasion (source of self-efficacy)
P8	Working within policy considerations in a practical, compassionate and flexible manner	Recognising differences including individual physiological conditions (source of self-efficacy)

Table 2: Principles that underpin the SSPF with links to SCT

Understanding self and task

> I remember at the end of one oral presentation, I found myself standing in the corner of the room. I seriously have no idea how I got there. Someone told me later that I moved while I was speaking. It was a very strange experience. (Student reflection, 2017)

The introduction of any assessment piece is a critical phase in the learning cycle. However, the added complication of PSA suggests that oral tasks may be more challenging for some students. For this reason, it is imperative that students are given every opportunity to understand the requirements of the task as well as their personal thoughts and feelings about speaking in front of others. The forethought phase of Zimmerman's SRL model provides useful guidance as it looks at both task analysis and self-motivation, including perceived levels of personal competency to complete the task. In supporting this introductory process, the following four sub-components will be explored: (1) establishing importance, (2) reflecting on experience, (3) reducing uncertainty about the task and (4) considering personal goals.

Establishing importance

Clarifying how oral communication is defined, and why it is included as an assessment item, is vital information for both educators and students. A transparent approach can help to demystify overall expectations, which is a necessary precursor for SRL. It also attempts to reconcile two competing views in the broader communication literature. The first perspective supports the inclusion of oral assessment at all levels of education. From this viewpoint, frequent opportunities to speak will lead to the development of necessary speaking skills. However, a second perspective proposes that individual differences (including personality

traits and heightened levels of arousability) can make this type of assessment unnecessarily challenging. Proponents of this second view question the long-term benefits of requiring some students to participate in class presentations, suggesting that it may do more harm than good. If an oral assessment task is prioritised then it must be supported. This includes addressing the following three questions at the beginning of any period of study: (1) what is the task? (2) why has it been included? and (3) how will it be supported? This information should be made explicit to ensure a better understanding of task value and relevance. In particular, the third question offers added reassurance for students who may find speaking tasks difficult.

Reflecting on experience

Through an SCT lens, reflection is an integral and integrated part of SRL that can occur before, during and after a learning activity. In particular, reflection helps students to scaffold their learning as they attempt to make meaning from past and current experiences. For example, in selecting strategies to meet a new task, prior experiences may guide choice (Winne, 2001). Equally, past successes or failures can influence overall interest and perceived capacity to complete a task (Bandura, 1997). As many university students have delivered an oral presentation at school or as part of previous units, there is value in unpacking these experiences before responding to future speaking challenges. In recalling a task that happened months or even years in the past, additional perspective may be gained. Therefore, reflection is a necessary step when introducing any new speaking opportunity.

To begin the reflection process, it is useful to consider environmental factors. In relation to previous oral assessment tasks this may include: explicit grading requirements; the need to record the presentation for moderation purposes (with the presence of a camera altering the

immediate classroom environment); changes to the regular classroom dynamic (where students are required to stand in front of peers to present); and possibly, limited opportunities to present in front of peers outside of assessment. A broader understanding of PSA, including potential causes, can help with this exploration. For example, the above factors relate to situational elements that can trigger state PSA. Therefore, in reflecting on the novelty of experience, the formality of the setting and the degree of attention from others (Buss, 1980), students may come to new realisations about the task and their initial response. It also highlights that while personal, behavioural and environmental factors influence motivation and action, they may not be of equal strength in all learning situations (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Overall, such reflection is not designed to undermine past speaking experiences, but rather explore significance in relation to current beliefs and attitudes.

A past speaking experience can evoke positive or negative memories. It is not uncommon for a negative experience to travel with a speaker from one presentation to the next. This is evident in Example 1, which highlights the emotional intensity of PSA and shows that past failures can discourage future participation. Students should be encouraged to consider how a range of factors may have influenced decision-making processes. As Zimmerman and Cleary (2009) state, it is desirable for students to reassess a strategy rather than simply blame a lack of personal ability. The latter is seen to be an "uncontrollable cause" which has the potential to disempower rather than empower agency (p. 254). Consequently, reflecting on past experiences can lead to new understandings concerning the specific choices made at the time, and whether or not these choices remain suitable in relation to future speaking tasks.

(S): I don't have any idea what to talk about for the assessment piece.

(E): Ok, so let's start with what you are studying or involved in outside of university?

(S): (Starts to cry)

(E): Let's take a seat for a moment, are you ok?

(S): I don't know why I'm crying.

(E): Is there something else going on for you at the moment?

(S): No, I just get really nervous thinking about speaking.

(E): You did very well today – you gave a good message (referring to an activity).

(S): Yeah, but did you see me shaking? Then I can feel my breath getting really tight.

(E): I didn't see or hear that but those feelings are often much more real to us than for those listening.

(S): I wasn't always like this. I used to be pretty good at speaking. But then in Year 12, I had to give this English oral and I just froze and then I started to stutter and I couldn't stop stuttering and I looked out and this person was looking at me like this (mimed person looking shocked with hands on face).

Example 1: Educator (E) and Student (S) conversation

Example 1 portrays a face-to-face conversation between an educator and student; however, there are alternative ways to invite students to consider past speaking experiences. For instance, at the start of a new semester, students could answer a brief online survey as part of a pre-work activity. Possible questions include:

1. What were you asked to do? / What were the overall expectations?
2. What support were you given to complete the task?
3. How did you feel at the end of the task (once you had received your grade)?
4. Is there anything you wished had been done differently in relation to how the task was set up and/or how you approached the task?

5. What have you taken away from this experience that may help you with future speaking tasks?

These questions deal with broader contextual matters as well as personal involvement. They encourage students to think about the task as a learning opportunity rather than simply an activity they were required to complete. In reflecting on both personal and environmental factors, it is possible that some inconsistencies will be uncovered in terms of overall expectations. For example, students may detect a potential discrepancy in being asked to hand in a full draft of a speech but only speak with limited notes or palm cards. Furthermore, previous choices may be reconsidered in light of situational demands. To illustrate, one first-year university student offered the following reflection about a secondary school oral presentation during an in-class activity:

> At our school we had three days to get through all of our English orals. I would always try to go first. Not just to get it over and done with but because it was really hard to listen to so many talks. I don't think many people were listening by the end. (Student reflection, 2017)

The sharing of such stories (with student consent) can validate feelings about speaking in front of others (i.e., 'I am not the only one who has experienced this') and also provide alternative perspectives (i.e., 'I thought the audience looked bored but maybe it was because we had already listened to nine other speakers'). This is a positive way of encouraging students to rethink current approaches to speaking and learn from the experiences of others.

With all general speaking memories, specific feedback from educators and other listeners can travel with a student from one task to the next. Therefore, in addition to reflecting on a past speaking task, it can be useful to re-examine these comments. Table 3 provides three student responses to an in-class reflection activity:

Questions	**Student A**	**Student B**	**Student C**
What have you been told?	I've been told that I need to slow down	That I look confident when I'm presenting	I need to be less reliant on a script
Is there another interpretation? What else could it mean?	I don't think there is another way of taking this comment.	I think that means that I don't come across as nervous which is good.	I think it was because I didn't look up much and that I just read it out
Why do you think you were told this?	Because she obviously thought that I spoke too fast and maybe she missed some of the things I was saying	I like to know what I am talking about and so don't just read from a script. I think this makes you seem more confident	It's a bit boring listening to someone just read
How could this comment help you to develop your speaking skills / help the audience to connect more with your message?	It's hard to listen to someone who speaks really quickly	Overall, confidence is a good thing. I like listening to people who seem confident. I want to keep on working on this, sometimes I feel more confident than other times	I'm not sure. I know what she is saying but I can't imagine not having a script
What makes it difficult to actually 'do' or use this comment?	Not sure how to slow down. It's just how I speak	I suppose if someone was told that they didn't look very confident it might be quite broad. I suppose more understanding of what confidence actually looks like	I don't like doing oral presentations, I get really nervous and as I said, I couldn't do it without a script. I would just get lost
In relation to this comment, what else would you like to know?	Telling me how to slow down and still cover everything and stay within a certain time limit	I suppose being more specific. I think it's because I don't read my notes but it would be good to hear any more ideas	How some people can do it? Just seem to be able to speak without a script

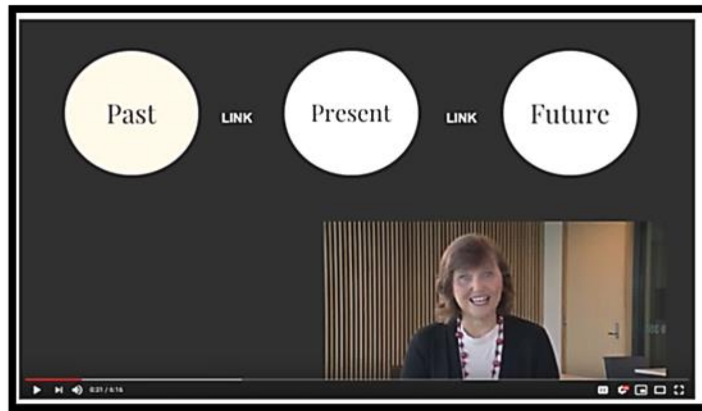
Table 3: Student responses about previous feedback (2017)

The above prompt questions are provided as a guide only and could be changed in light of student recollections. However, while some responses may seem obvious or straightforward, they help to focus attention. For example, the oft-written comments of telling students to ‘slow down’ or ‘not rely on a script’ are of little value without strategies to accomplish these desired qualities. Reflecting on past speaking experiences is not only beneficial for students; it is also a simple and tangible way for educators to uncover and integrate “existing knowledge”[15] into new activities or resources (Ambrose, Bridges, Lovett, DiPietro, & Norman, 2010, p. 13). Specifically, educators can address potential concerns about an upcoming speaking task and review instructional material from the students’ point of view. This type of ongoing conversation reflects the interactive nature of this type of communication and can lead to the development of additional support material.

Reducing uncertainty about the task

Although previous speaking experiences can increase or decrease a student’s ability to engage with a new oral assessment task, another limitation on student performance is being unsure of overall expectations. It follows that reducing uncertainty about oral tasks is likely to lessen PSA (Kelly & Keaten, 2000; Witt et al., 2006). A tendency to pre-load a unit’s online learning site, or at least have access to a unit outline ahead of time, means that students may ‘read’ about an oral presentation for assessment before ‘hearing’ about it from an instructor. In line with the *integrated model for oral presentations* (refer page 18), the usefulness of written documents to explain this type of assessment is questioned. An alternative method is to provide a video resource (refer Video 1).

[15] Ambrose et al. (2010) posit that existing knowledge refers to an “amalgam of facts, concepts, models, perceptions, beliefs, values and attitudes” (p. 13).



Video 1: Sharing assessment expectations (oral presentation)

An introductory video offers necessary information about an assessment piece that can be viewed multiple times during a semester of study. Significantly, it demonstrates general speaking strategies such as relying on a structure to develop a point and making language choices to support a spoken message. This enables the educator to not only explain the task but also model an oral mode of delivery. The length of the video can mirror overall time requirements to show how much information can be covered in a set time frame.[16] Therefore, the inclusion of an assessment video is a simple and effective way of introducing and clarifying task requirements.

In addition to sharing assessment expectations through a recording, the early provision of task sheets and marking rubrics (in support of criterion-referenced assessment) is still warranted. Although educators may present this material in different formats, students are encouraged to look at such documents before commencing a task. In designing rubrics, Moskal (2003) suggests they should be "clearly aligned with the requirements of the task" and "expressed in terms of observable behaviours or product characteristics" (p. 5). With oral presentations, this means assessing what is seen and heard on the day of delivery. It is worth noting that such

[16] Video 1 is six minutes long and supports a five-to-six minute oral assessment piece.

behavioural evaluations may not provide the whole story in relation to what a speaker is thinking or feeling when presenting. This lack of correlation is supported in the literature and aligns with my case study report that regularly mentioned a discrepancy between what I witnessed as an educator and how students told me they were feeling. Therefore, while the SSPF does not advocate the removal of grading instruments, it recommends careful consideration of what is being marked and why.

A detailed discussion of criterion-referenced assessment is outside the bounds of this study; however, it is relevant to note here because any inconsistency can lead to uncertainty around stated requirements. Universities have strict assessment protocols that include “reference to learning outcomes and clearly defined standards of performance” (QUT, 2019). This means that assessment is based on:

> pre-determined and clearly articulated criteria which contribute to the reliability and validity of [oral] assessment; and associated standards of knowledge, skills, competencies and/or capabilities that are high but attainable to motivate students and focus their energy on learning rather than on competition with peers. (QUT, 2011, pp. 9–10)

In creating rubrics for evaluation purposes, a number of marking elements are prioritised. However, providing a sliding scale of achievement is a challenge with some forms of assessment, resulting in standards that are either too vague or prescriptive (Wolf & Stevens, 2007), or rely on an overuse of adjectives or adverbs (Kohn, 2006). In light of the dynamic nature of oral communication, these concerns are valid for this type of assessment. In

particular, marking elements surrounding ‘presentation style’ or ‘delivery’[17] are problematic. For example, one university rubric offered the following description to support satisfactory achievement in relation to presentation style: ‘Clear and confident presentation. Some eye contact. Does not engage with the audience. Presentation is partially supported by notes’. This information is ambiguous. Most importantly, it is questionable how it could help a student to plan an effective presentation or review current strategies. The SSPF does not promote a definitive marking rubric for oral presentations as these tools should reflect individual unit outcomes. However, as PSA is defined as fear of speaking in front of an audience, then expectations surrounding the speaking component of the task need to be prioritised. This includes clear task sheets and well-constructed marking rubrics that are supported through learning opportunities.

Considering personal goals

Another way students are encouraged to take charge of their learning is through personal goal setting. As indicated in Figure 5, SCT recognises a strong connection between goal setting and self-efficacy beliefs. This is because students who experience some degree of success in meeting initial goals are more likely to persevere. To ensure goals are achievable, it is recommended that shorter-term goals (proximal) are established to support longer-term ones (distal) (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998). For instance, increasing confidence is an oft-cited aim of student or novice speakers. However, as Bandura (1997) states, “confidence is a nondescript term that refers to strength or belief but not does not necessarily specify what the certainty is about” (p. 382). Encouraging students to unpack what confidence would *look like*

[17] There is no consensus surrounding which voice (e.g., pitch, tone and volume) or speech (e.g., pace, pause and emphasis) qualities should be included on an oral assessment rubric. In addition, there is of often some reference made to eye contact, use of notes, body language and/or gestures.

or *sound like* for them provides a more realistic and incremental way of assessing achievement in this area.

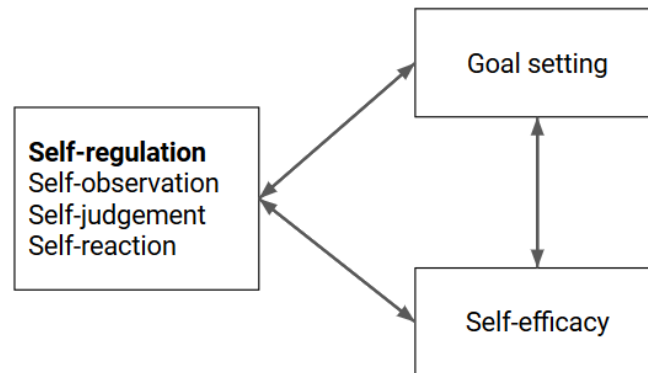


Figure 5: Social cognitive processes involved in self-regulated learning (Schunk, 1990)

Communication scholars suggest that PSA may prevent initial engagement with a task, limiting the ability to plan and enact goals of personal relevance. To assist with this, goal setting could be introduced in a more informal manner. For example, the following seven questions have been used at the beginning of a communication unit to gauge initial attitudes and experiences surrounding speaking in front of others. They are designed to help students to link past experiences with potential future speaking opportunities.

1. Who do you like listening to and why? Name a person you think is an effective communicator. Why do you think this?
2. What type of career can you see yourself entering? What do you think are the main qualities of an effective communicator in your field?
3. What experiences have you had in relation to speaking in front of others? (e.g., school, work, sporting or community groups)
4. How do you usually prepare for an oral presentation? What kind of notes/script do you like to use when presenting?

5. How do you generally feel about speaking in front of others?
6. What type of comments have you received in the past about your speaking skills?
7. What are some areas that you would like to work on during this unit to enhance your oral communication skills?

The final question invites students to consider areas of personal significance.[18] Students may start with a general desire to 'increase confidence' but move on to what this means for them. For example, one student wrote:

> I want to work on my confidence talking to a group because when I get nervous I mumble, forget what I'm saying and speak too fast. I would like to learn skills so I can confidently speak to an audience without feeling embarrassed. Additionally, perhaps learning a tactic to help be less reliant on a script would be handy. (Student reflection, 2017)

The above response includes the four most frequently identified speaking areas that students want to develop, as outlined in Project 1. These are: (1) increasing confidence and decreasing nerves, (2) speaking at a more meaningful pace, (3) being less reliant on a script and (4) engaging in more eye contact.[19] While students are encouraged to view goals as standards that direct action (Schunk, 1990), educators are charged with supporting the process. However, pedagogical practices must acknowledge that individual students can experience PSA in different ways and levels of intensity. This means reconsidering the instructional

[18] Established templates, such as SMART goals, provide a tangible way to map intentions. However, a potential drawback is that the five stated elements (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) could force or limit responses when applied to speaking goals.

[19] Although this student did not mention eye contact specifically, it is reasonable to infer that this would be an advantage of being less reliant on a script.

value of some general speaking information. As mentioned, encouraging a speaker to "convert nerves into enthusiasm" (Monash University, 2007) is of little use for someone experiencing high state PSA, which is marked by increased physiological arousal. Preferred speaking qualities, including suggestions for development, will be further explored in *Learning through engagement*.

Learning through engagement

Conventional wisdom advocates that practice sessions are the key to any good oral presentation. In fact, generic lists of speaking advice often include the phrase, "practice makes perfect" (Macquarie University, 2015). However, a focus on perfection may intensify PSA rather than inspire effective oral communication (Motely, 2009). Furthermore, this DCI research raises questions about consigning practice sessions to final planning stages. Instead, purposeful practice is seen as an essential part of the whole performance process which, according to Zimmerman's (2000) model, incorporates two integrated components. The first component is self-control, which is an appropriate foil for PSA as it can manifest as an absence of control. This includes employing appropriate strategies, utilising positive self-talk and seeking assistance when required. The second component is self-observation and focuses on monitoring learning processes (or mental tracking), as well as engaging in some form of self-recording (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009). In supporting oral presentations for assessment, Zimmerman's sub-components have been reinterpreted as: (1) providing ongoing support, (2) unpacking desired presentation skills, (3) increasing opportunities to present and (4) learning from others.

A more active approach to learning during the performance phase promotes a sense of agency, and the ability to exert influence over one's learning and learning environment

(Schunk & Pajares, 2010). As Bandura (2006) states, this can lead to "cognitive self-regulation" (p. 164), which includes visualising, evaluating, modifying plans and constructing new learning opportunities. These higher-order thinking processes rely on a student's ability to self-monitor, which requires time and some form of repetition. It also connects to more recent communication scholarship that suggests regular opportunities to present a message can challenge initial negative thoughts and feelings (Finn et al., 2009). Therefore, this section looks for ways to increase engagement and promote ongoing self-monitoring in a constructive manner.

Providing ongoing support

Ideas and resources outlined in the previous section, *Understanding self and task,* provide a strong base in setting up assessment requirements. However, given that oral assessment can induce feelings of unease throughout the preparation phase, there is a need for continued support. Scholars suggest that while this type of help-seeking may appear to be "the antithesis of self-control", it can promote more active involvement (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009, p. 303). Once initial information about an oral assessment task has been released, students may seek further clarification. In addition to more informal chats and in-class discussions, online opportunities extend assessment conversations. For example, early in a semester, first-year university students enrolled in an introductory communication unit were asked the following question through an online platform: 'After reading the task sheet and viewing the video, what questions would you like answered about Assessment 1?' From a cohort of 560, 91 students responded. These initial questions were filtered to create a frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet which was made available to all students (refer Appendix C). In this unit, additional online checkpoints were scheduled in the lead up to the assessment piece. Therefore, the FAQ sheet became a rolling document with students alerted to any updates.

Offering opportunities for students to ask questions and/or express concerns is an important part of SRL. In relation to oral presentations for assessment, this type of resource can validate individual feelings about a task, as well as offer necessary guidance. As Bandura (2009) states, "those of low efficacy are stressed both emotionally and physiologically by perceived overload, in which task demands exceed … coping capabilities" (p. 183). The PSA literature confirms that such an overload can disrupt task engagement. The sharing of this information also broadens the notion of help-seeking. Specifically, if students are unsure of what questions to ask, or what help is needed (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009), it is possible to learn from others. Therefore, while this is a practical strategy to boost personal agency, in a teaching context it can also be perceived in terms of collective agency (Bandura, 2001) as this type of online document relies on a combined effort to be most beneficial.

Unpacking desired presentation skills

Although SCT highlights the importance of self-efficacy, it does not deny the need for appropriate skills to carry out a task. Skills training is mentioned extensively in the PSA literature. First, a lack of appropriate skills is seen as a potential cause of PSA (Richmond et al., 2013). Second, a common approach to teaching public speaking is through a skills-based program (Robinson, 1997). In the broader communication literature, there is some debate over what constitutes a skills-based approach (Kelly & Keaten, 2009). Stemming from Project 1 findings, a more extended definition is used in this research and includes direct instruction, modelling, goal setting, independent and group rehearsal, peer and instructor feedback and self-monitoring (Glasser, 1981). In particular, reference to SRL constructs such as modelling (observational learning), goal setting and self-monitoring help to alleviate concerns that skills training may not deal directly with thoughts and feelings associated with PSA (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004).

The SSPF addresses the need for appropriate skills to be taught, practised and assessed in a university setting; however, it also recognises potential limitations because of content requirements (related to unit outcomes), time constraints and instructor expertise. While accepting that not all units have the same learning aims or operate in the same manner, the SSPF encourages educators to reassess current instruction surrounding the delivery component of any presentation. For example, assessment guidelines often advise students to 'sound more natural', 'slow down', 'use pauses wisely', 'speak in a more conversational manner', 'vary rhythm', 'look at the audience', 'be less reliant on notes' and 'connect with those listening'. What is missing is how these desired presentation skills can be achieved. One approach is to take a closer look at extemporaneous speaking. While educators and students may not be immediately familiar with this term, it is worth exploring as it incorporates a number of favoured speaking qualities, indicated in the above comments.

Extemporaneous speaking

To encourage students to speak in a more engaging manner, instructional material often refers to the benefits of speaking from notes, outlines or prompts. This connects to an extemporaneous[20] mode of delivery which is defined here as being well planned but not committed to an exact word order in the mind (memorised) or on a page (scripted). While some general speaking resources state this method is the "easiest to give effectively" (Verderber, Verderber, & Sellnow, 2008, p. 216) research into CA and PSA reveals it is a challenging requirement for many speakers (Witt & Behnke, 2006). The SSPF supports the latter view but also suggests that students are receptive to learn more about this method of speaking. For example, the following question was posed to university students enrolled in a

[20] Extemporaneous speaking does not discount the use of notes but rather acknowledges the importance of crafting a message to progress a line of reasoning. In this way, a well-structured speaking outline offers necessary prompts to keep a speaker on track.

speech communication unit: Name something that we have discussed that has challenged you as a speaker or your perception of effective communication. What would you like clarified or expanded on? One student responded:

> One thing I'm not sure about is the concept of speaking without memorising. I always wanted to learn to speak like this; however, so far it has not been what is expected of me in academic settings. Rather, memorising a script has been preferred. So I'm glad we are learning how to present in a realistic and more engaging way. The idea of speaking like this is challenging for me but I know it will be useful. (Student reflection, 2017)

As detailed in Project 1, for many students past experiences involved writing a script, submitting a draft of that script, and then reading (or memorising) that script during an in-class presentation. A scripted piece (manuscript) may be suitable in some situations;[21] however, in general, it is not a sustainable way of preparing a spoken message. Specifically, it is a time-consuming method that can affect overall engagement because a read or memorised script tends to increase pace and lessen vocal variety. In addition, telling a student to 'slow down' or 'use pauses wisely' is a difficult undertaking when language choices reflect a written document. As mentioned in *Reducing uncertainty about the task*, marking elements often stipulate some form of preferred 'presentation style', with descriptors advocating a more 'engaging' or 'conversational' way of speaking. These desired speaking qualities require explicit commentary.

[21] For example, conference papers, keynote addresses, eulogies, wedding speeches and more formal lectern speeches.

The following three videos provide online support for extemporaneous speaking. To begin, Video 2 offers a brief overview of this mode of delivery. It was available for students at the beginning of a semester to support an oral assessment piece. As mentioned, such video resources can be viewed multiple times to check initial understanding of a concept, offer practical guidance and model a desired delivery method.

[Video 2: Explaining an extemporaneous approach to speaking]

Next, Video 3 presents an extemporaneous approach to telling a personal story. It has been used to demonstrate how to rely on a structure (rather than script) to progress a message.

[Video 3: How I got my job (extemporaneous example)]

Finally, Video 4 is a manuscript example of the same story, and is offered by way of comparison.[22]

Video 4: How I got my job (manuscript example)

These resources provide instruction through substance. Instead of just telling students to "try to be more conversational and rely less on notes" (University of Sydney, 2018), they offer a more detailed account of what this means and how it could be achieved.

In merging direct instruction with practical experience, students can address specific areas of need. For example, the following comment is in response to a question about how students prefer to deliver an oral presentation:

> I have to be familiar with a script in order to deliver the speech effectively. I find it difficult to expand on a single dot point. At high school I used to type an entire script and learn the entire script off by heart, that's when I felt most confident in speaking. (Student reflection, 2017)

[22] There are three recognised ways of presenting a prepared spoken message: manuscript, memorised and extemporaneous.

This comment summarises general student concerns in relation to moving away from a full script in favour of notes or prompts. For these students, a more structured approach may be beneficial (Kelly & Keaten, 2000). Table 4 provides an excerpt from a speaking outline to introduce a talk about a gap year. It also illustrates two ways this outline could be used during delivery. More detailed hooks provide necessary support for anxious speakers, especially for those who fear 'stumbling through a message', 'forgetting lines' or even, 'sounding stupid'. Yet, these hooks can also lead to a more engaging presentation style as exact word choices are made at the time of delivery, which is a hallmark of this delivery method. There is instructional value in explaining how to speak in an extemporaneous manner (Video 2) as well as how to speak from an outline (Video 3). In addition, it is important to recognise individual differences and that some speakers may require a more comprehensive outline than others.

Speaking outline	Version 1	Version 2
• Climbed Eiffel Tower, walked around Stonehenge, visited a Christmas market in Germany and watched a light show in Hong Kong • Not an expert traveller • Took gap year (choice: work, travel) • Three points: What is a gap year? Why it's worth considering? What you'll gain?	Last year, I climbed the Eiffel Tower, took a walk around Stonehenge, went to a Christmas market in Germany and watched a light show in Hong Kong. But I don't want to give you the impression that I'm an expert traveller. I did all this on a gap year. Some people choose to work, I decided to travel and it really was the best decision for me. So today I want to tell you more about a gap year, including why it's worth considering and what you'll gain.	This time last year I was in France, climbing the Eiffel tower, but I did more than that. I also visited Stonehenge, had the most amazing gingerbread at a Christmas market in Germany, and watched a light show in Hong Kong. But I wouldn't call myself an expert traveller. I spent last year taking a gap year before coming to uni. Some of my friends chose to work but I decided to travel. So, let me tell you more, starting with what is a gap year, why it's worth considering and what you'll gain if you take one too.

Table 4: Speaking outline with two different versions of wording

Increasing opportunities to present

Although instructional material can help to unpack desired speaking qualities, students require time to implement strategies and evaluate effectiveness. Repeated opportunities to speak a message can help students to experience some degree of success, which also strengthens motivation and self-satisfaction (Zimmerman, 2002; Zumbrunn, Tadlock, & Roberts, 2011). Therefore, in the lead up to an oral presentation for assessment, students are likely to benefit from guided practice sessions offered as part of ungraded formative assessment.[23] The benefits of formative assessment are well documented in the literature (Black & Wiliam, 2010; Hattie, 2009; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The intent here is to consider how formative speaking tasks can assist in monitoring progress, determining improvements and enhancing learning, as defined in QUT's assessment protocols (2011; 2019). For this to occur, three pertinent points are considered. First, formative assessment is useful for both educators and students. That is, educators can adjust learning strategies in response to perceived needs, and students are given more ways to engage in the learning process, including seeking out and acting on feedback (Black & Wiliam, 2010). Second, feedback is not the sole responsibility of the educator but also involves self and peer responses (Black & Wiliam, 2010). Third, planned activities can vary in degree of formality, which provides ongoing opportunities for self-reflection and the potential to re-evaluate the effectiveness of existing strategies (Popham, 2008).

Formative assessment (informal)

Different units will require different support mechanisms. In other words, it is not the intention to replicate resources intended for designated speech units. However, general findings from the communication literature provide a useful starting point. For example,

[23] Formative assessment connects with mastery experiences outlined in *developing public speaking efficacy*.

extensive research recommends enhancing opportunities for students to adapt to any speaking task as early as possible (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004). This favoured pattern of habituation requires purposeful practice sessions where students take an active role in planning, presenting and reflecting on each 'rehearsal', supporting a broader understanding of formative tasks:

> Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that the evidence about a student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learner, or their peers, to make decisions about next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or be better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of evidence that was elicited. (Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 9)

Encouraging students to 'make decisions about next steps' reflects key sub-components of Zimmerman's performance phase, in particular the importance of self-monitoring. For this to occur, students require ongoing opportunities to evaluate progress. For example, Appendix D outlines a potential in-class activity that supports active involvement. The overall aim is to present a similar message three times[24] with a chance to reflect between each attempt. In this way, students can make adjustments to the message before speaking it again (for example, 'I think I need a stronger link between parts A and B' or, 'More background information might help to place my story in context'). This type of self-monitoring can also reassess feelings of discomfort associated with speaking in front of others, leading to more positive associations. Overall, repeated opportunities to speak a message can support 'within-session habituation',

[24] This task aligns with an established pedagogical approach known as TRIPLESPEAK developed by Dubner and Mills (1984).

because students learn to adapt to the task more easily, as well as 'between-session habituation', as students may feel less fearful from one task to the next (Finn et al., 2009).

Formative assessment (formal)

While in-class speaking activities may help to alleviate some aspects of PSA, a prominent feature of this type of anxiety is a fear of speaking in front an audience and being evaluated (Bodie, 2010; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). A fear of judgement may be reduced through a formative speaking task that offers feedback but no grade. In this way, constructive criticism is perceived as less threatening as it is given in the "context of preparation or rehearsal" (Kelly & Keaten, 2000, p. 53). Yet, the task still mirrors assessment conditions, triggering a level of fear that allows for new, and alternative, information to be processed (for example, 'I did feel nervous but was still able to deliver my talk'). To illustrate, in one communication unit, an ungraded speaking task was announced in Week 1. Initial information included a task sheet and example video presentation. Students delivered their short talks in Week 3 and received immediate written feedback. In Week 4, a general video (refer Video 5) was released to provide an overview of feedback comments.

Video 5: General feedback following an in-class formative speaking task

In this instance, students received a paper copy of feedback so that it could be provided at the end of the class (refer Appendix E). To further encourage student participation, two additional activities were included. Initially, students identified one or two areas they would like to receive feedback on in relation to their ability to speak a message.[25] Later, students were asked to make reference to this task (and feedback received) as part of a reflective exercise following their major oral presentation for assessment (in Weeks 7 or 8). One student wrote:

> From the formative assessment feedback, I made sure I was more familiar with my beginning to make a stronger impression. I approached this task differently to previous speaking tasks, which was quite challenging but rewarding. Usually, I would write an entire script and practise by having the script in front of me at all times. However, for this piece, I created a detailed plan to follow and practised from that. This helped me to keep better eye contact with my audience and use better gestures. For my next oral presentation, I would like to focus on my breathing when I'm speaking, as I felt a little rushed and breathless. I would also like to practise moving more around the speaking space, as I feel this would add another element to engage the audience. (Student reflection, 2017)

An ability to rethink or revise strategies may also benefit private practice sessions. Instead of just practising the same presentation numerous times, students could set specific goals for each rehearsal. For example, 'This time, I will not stop if I lose my place but will work on ways to get back on track'. Assisting students to achieve such goals may require additional

[25] Students were asked to write these areas on the top of the feedback form at the beginning of the class.

knowledge and guidance (including, how to use a speaking outline effectively, or how to rely on a bridging statement[26] to get back to a preferred message). A major benefit of SRL is that it provides incentives to work through difficulties, including coping strategies when things do not go to plan (Bandura, 2009).

The role of technology

In the higher education context, reduced face-to-face interaction and general time constraints may limit the use of formative assessment tasks. Online platforms[27] provide another outlet, where students can upload practice speeches for review. While some level of anxiety is likely to be activated (as the final recording will be seen by others), there is also the potential to re-record efforts and reappraise strategies between each take. In addition, recent technological advances have opened up further possibilities. For example, many universities have access to virtual reality (VR) cameras to create 360-degree videos. Figure 6 is a screenshot of a video recorded in a tutorial room at QUT. It supports a three-minute oral presentation and includes a timer. The video can be accessed through a YouTube link and works with a phone and inexpensive pair of VR goggles. It allows students to practise their presentations at home in a more meaningful manner. An intentional decision was made to video the room without an audience as recorded responses would not match individual student presentations. However, it provides a more realistic space than oft-cited references to rehearsing in front of a mirror. Specifically, students can practise gesturing and using volume that is appropriate for the size of the room. In addition to VR technology, a number of public speaking apps are readily

[26] In speech communication, a bridging statement is a way of transitioning from one point to the next. In particular, it can assist a speaker to regain control following a mental blank. For example, after referring to a speaking outline for support, a speaker may begin the next section with: 'Another thing that is important to mention here is…'.

[27] For example, Padlet, Flipgrid or a class YouTube channel.

available. However, in relation to managing PSA, it is recommended that they augment planned learning activities rather than replace them.

Figure 6: Screenshot from a 360-degree video to support in-class oral presentations

There are a number of creative ways that educators can help students to feel less threatened when speaking in front of others (Behnke & Sawyer, 2004). In one film and television unit at QUT, a structured support process for oral presentations is in place. First, a member of the communication teaching team presents an overview of oral presentations and how they relate to professional practice. Second, students present an in-class presentation which is ungraded. While this acts as a formative task, it is actually a run-through of their final assessment piece. Third, the presentation is recorded and marked online. (Video 6 provides general tips on how to speak to camera for educators and students.) In the time available, this sequence supports good learning outcomes for students, including audience engagement through the in-class formative task as well as an opportunity to view final presentations.

Video 6: Speaking to camera

Assessment time

The most extreme behavioural response of PSA is avoidance, which may prevent a student from enrolling in a unit that includes an oral presentation for assessment (McCroskey et al., 2009). However, two other reactions are possible. First, students may not show up to a scheduled presentation, forfeiting their grade. Second, students may endure such presentations but quickly forget about them until required to do another one. A detailed support process can help to alleviate some concerns related to state PSA and includes setting up a positive speaking environment from the outset. In this way, the actual day of delivery will be an extension of a well-designed learning process, rather than a one-off opportunity to present. Furthermore, a supportive learning environment reinforces the communal nature of oral communication and that an engaged audience is not just a courteous requirement at assessment times.

While the presence of an audience provides immediate feedback, oral assessment tasks also have an evaluative component as part of summative assessment. The grading of oral presentations is a topic worthy of another research project; however, the provision of feedback is a necessary consideration of SRL. The overall purpose of feedback is "to reduce discrepancies between current understandings/performance and a desired goal" (Hattie &

Timperley, 2007, p. 87). Hattie and Timperley (2007) state that effective feedback enables students to answer three questions: (1) where am I going? (feed up), (2) how am I going? (feed back) and (3) where to next? (feed forward). This more holistic approach reflects active involvement on behalf of both learner and educator. As mentioned previously, one way of reducing discrepancies is for students to reconsider strategies or seek alternative support, which promotes agency.

In providing feedback, Timperley (2013) suggests educators refrain from offering personal praise unless it is directed to "effort, self-regulation, engagement, or processes related to the task and its performance" (p. 403). In the main, the SSPF reflects this view. However, given that internal manifestations of PSA (thoughts and feelings) and external behaviour are not always synchronised, care is advised when making inferences about perceived effort. For example, there are inconsistencies with the following comment which is presented in the literature as constructive feedback following an oral presentation for assessment:

> The majority of the time, the presenter successfully kept eye contact with the audience. However, in several places, the presenter used his or her notes (or cheat sheets) frequently. Therefore, the feedback provider has the impression that the presenter required considerable time to think about the content or structure of the presentation. Based on this, it is questionable to what extent the presenter thoroughly prepared for the presentation performance. (van Ginkel, Gulikers, Biemans, & Mulder, 2015, p. 956)

As van Ginkel et al. (2015) note, this comment relates to the use of eye contact. The word 'majority' in the first line seems to suggest 'most of the time'. However, the final sentence, which questions preparation efforts, contradicts this initial statement. In addition, the use of

the term ‘cheat sheets’, in parentheses, is an interesting language choice. While this may indeed be another way of referring to notes, prompts or speaking outlines, this particular wording appears to reinforce a need for more preparation. In relation to PSA, a simple cause and effect relationship is not supported in the literature. For example, momentary lapses in eye contact may not indicate questionable preparation practices but rather a heightened level of arousability in relation to being called upon to speak.

In support of SRL, rather than assume that all assessment pieces will be designed in a constructive manner, it is more useful to equip students to unpack feedback for personal relevance. For example, the following comment is a summary of conversation with a student:

> I got an early start on the presentation. I spent a lot of time researching and planning my message. I also practised it lots of times and thought I knew it pretty well. However, on the day I was due to present, nerves kicked in and I ended up stumbling through my presentation and even forgetting a major section. The comments I received suggested that I didn’t sound prepared and needed to spend more time rehearsing my speech. (Student reflection, 2017)

For this student, instructor feedback did not match personal experience. However, new understandings could emerge which may lead to rethinking preparation strategies for next time, including how to manage the confrontation stage and how to recover from an initial stumble. While this will not change a final grade, it has the potential to provide a more meaningful learning experience.

Learning from others

The nature of oral communication affords a variety of observational opportunities. In addition to the benefits of watching other students present a live or mediated message, it is also possible to learn from professional speakers. For example, numerous universities provide links to established oral speaking websites such as TED talks (Deakin University, 2019; QUT, 2018; Western Sydney University, 2019). While these are free to view at any time, there is potential to use them in a more targeted manner. For example, specific areas mentioned as part of the *integrated model for oral presentations* can be further explored, including how a speaker uses supporting material to back up central claims, how a speech is structured or what language choices have been made to support oral delivery (refer Appendix F for an example).

Modelled behaviour can also include the provision of past student examples or exemplars. Newlyn (2013) defines exemplars as “samples of past work completed by former students who have undertaken work of a specified quality” (p. 26). In relation to assessment, these samples provide a tangible link between task expectations and stated marking criteria. However, the role of exemplars needs to be carefully considered from both an assessment angle and in terms of supporting individual speakers. In particular, SCT recommends using similar models as a way of building self-efficacy beliefs as highly skilled individuals may reinforce a perceived divide between the observed and observer (Bandura, 1997). As an alternative to exemplars, students could discuss how they prepared for a presentation, emphasising the process rather than a finished product. This could include strategies used to meet specific demands or concerns. For example, through one conversation with a student, the following comment was made:

> I knew what I wanted to say but there were times that I needed a prompt. For me, the speaking outline didn't help as much so I ended up putting a bit of a provocative question at the end of some of my slides as a reminder of where I was going. For example, I had a statistic on one slide and at the bottom I typed, 'So why should we care?' I found this helped me to move on to the next section. It was pretty short and hopefully just reinforced my link. (Student reflection, 2017)

Listening to someone recount their experiences can lead to useful insights in terms of unpacking the task, deciding on strategies and overcoming difficulties (Bandura, 2005). This may include sharing stories connected with PSA, where the focus is on experiences that contributed to new insights or attitudes. One example of how this could be achieved is included as Appendix G. It is a prototype for a series of short articles to be shared on a university website. In collecting such stories from a variety of speakers (for example, students, staff and alumni), the aim is to highlight how effective speaking skills are developed.[28] Furthermore, shorter vignettes can be shared via other means such as blog posts (refer Appendix H). These stories reiterate that some form of PSA is a normal response when called upon to speak (Robinson, 1997) and offer strategies that speakers have found useful in dealing with this phenomenon.

Finally, in addition to creating new resources, there are numerous websites, YouTube channels and blogs that specifically deal with public speaking. However, any generic material must be examined to ensure it fits with overall unit/task goals, and also recognises different levels of PSA. Otherwise such outsourcing could send contradictory messages, or even

[28] This is a more proactive approach than simply listing a number of well-known celebrities who suffer from stage-fright.

exacerbate feelings of speaking anxiety. It is also important to evaluate support material for academic integrity. In relation to oral presentation tips, it is not uncommon to find linked materials on university sites that draw on contested research about PSA. For example, the oft-cited adage that public speaking is more feared than death is not only unhelpful but also lacking in explanation. According to Dwyer and Davidson (2012) it is the most common fear but not the top ranked fear. The latter, their research suggests, is in fact death.

Peer evaluation

Another way of eliciting useful feedback (learning from others) is through peer evaluation. However, in recognising the individual nature of PSA, caution is advised in using this type of feedback unless students are taught how to offer constructive criticism.[29] Valuable feedback can still be gained through more informal measures. For example, it is possible to create an inventory of positive speaking traits via an online discussion board. The following comments were gathered at the end of an in-class formative speaking task. Initially, students were asked to identify something that they found engaging about the presentations. Comments included:

> It was great when speakers told stories about their personal experiences; it made it a lot easier to relate to what the speaker was saying.
>
> I liked it when speakers used pauses which made the speech less rushed.
>
> I loved when one speaker was talking about her embarrassing fashion past and she actually spoke in a hushed voice to make it seem like she WAS embarrassed but then picked up her volume so people could still hear her. I found that part really relatable.

[29] Peer assessment can be a more formal exercise (where students provide comments, and possibly a grade, using an established marking instrument).

A second question invited students to consider something they would like to try next time they are called on to speak. Comments included:

> One thing I would like to try next time I have to speak is to try to be a bit more descriptive to help my audience visualise what I am saying. I liked it when speakers were able to do that.

> One thing I would like to try next time I have to give a presentation is to think about how my ideas link together. Some speakers can do this really well and it makes it much easier to follow what they are saying.

> One thing I would like to try next time is incorporating more movement. I tend to stay in the same spot the whole time.

These are honest and thoughtful comments that give a new dimension to peer feedback. Activities discussed so far promote a more flexible approach to learning where students can engage or re-engage with a number of speaking activities. In addition, each experience can inform the next, highlighting the importance of self-reflection.

Responding to effort

The cyclical nature of SRL posits that one learning experience informs the next. As Zimmerman (2000) suggests, an opportunity to respond to effort can contribute to new understandings about an experience. In relation to oral presentations for assessment, this type of self-reflection plays a vital role in developing public speaking self-efficacy. In particular, it contributes to personal meaning making through evaluation of both task-related strategies and

levels of confidence. The value of this type of examination is privileged across all three phases of SRL. To begin, it is beneficial to reflect on past speaking experiences before embarking on a new one. This can help to clarify any areas of potential difficulty as well as establish goals of personal relevance. Next, there is value in reflecting on progress which can lead to seeking additional support and monitoring goals. Finally, reflection is vital at the completion of a task, which, according to Zimmerman (2000), includes both self-judgement and self-reaction. In this phase:

> Learners engage in self-evaluation of tasks completed, examine their level of self-satisfaction and adapt to their circumstances by determining whether tasks need to be repeated and whether the cycle will move on to a new task if the previous one is considered at a satisfactory level. (Bembenutty, White, & Velez, 2015, p. 17)

As with more formal feedback mechanisms, this means evaluating overall performance based on some type of standard. Drawing on the work of Bandura (1986), Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) state that a standard can include “prior levels of performance” (p. 304). This is at the core of SRL, in that one experience feeds into the next. In addition, students are encouraged to reflect on personal levels of satisfaction with the task. As Zimmerman (2002) suggests, self-satisfaction includes adaptive or defensive responses. Adaptive responses promote ongoing self-awareness and the possibly of “discarding or modifying an ineffective learning strategy” (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 68), which offers a more productive way of managing PSA. While there is merit in providing informal reflective exercises, there is also scope to offer more formal opportunities, which can become part of assessment requirements.

The benefits of learning from reflection on experience have been well documented (Bolton, 2010; Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Dewey, 1933; Kolb, 1984; Moon, 1999; Schon, 1983). Established models provide a way of guiding students through a reflective process. In particular, a series of prompt questions can encourage students to think more deeply and, potentially, differently[30] about an experience. A number of reflective models are available, including Gibbs' model of reflection (1988), Kolb's learning cycle (1984) and Jay and Johnson's (2002) three-dimensional model. In addition, established models can be redeveloped to meet specific needs. As indicated in Project 1, Bain, Ballantyne, Packer and Mills' (1999) 5-R scale of reflection was modified to a 4-R scale by Ryan and Ryan (2013). Universities have also developed models of reflection to support student learning such as QUT's STAR-L framework (QUT, 2017b).

Models of reflection differ in terms of the number of stages, depth of questions and attention to reflexivity. However, Quinn (2000) identified three common or central requirements in terms of retrospection, self-evaluation and reorientation. In particular, self-evaluation involves critically examining strategies used to complete a particular task, and reorientation suggests ways of approaching future tasks. Both processes are essential for SRL. Additionally, established prompt questions can travel with students once a unit of study has finished, hopefully encouraging ongoing self-reflection. Example 2 provides one way of incorporating a reflective task as part of an oral assessment piece. It is based on an adapted version of the 4-Rs scale (Ryan & Ryan, 2013) and includes a short rationale. In addition to reflecting on a current task, it prompts consideration of a future speaking event, supporting the cyclical nature of SRL.

[30] A key part of reflection involves considering alternative perspectives.

Effective communicators are reflective communicators. Professional communicators are always looking for ways to enhance their delivery style. This means learning from each presentation experience and considering what worked well and what could be done differently next time. This type of reflection is a positive and constructive process. It recognises that a single opportunity to present does not define your ability as a communicator. You will have many opportunities to communicate a message in life, including at university and in the workplace. The following reflection is planned to develop your skills in this area. It is adapted from a recognised 4-Rs scale of reflection (Ryan & Ryan, 2013). The prompt questions are provided to guide your response. Within a 500-word limit, you are required to write in paragraph form rather than answer each prompt directly.

Reporting/responding
What were you required to do? What were your initial thoughts/opinions about the task? How did you approach this task? How did you feel immediately after presenting?

Relating
How was this communication task different or similar to prior communication tasks? From past experiences, and your general knowledge of presenting in front of others, how capable did you feel planning and presenting this message?

Reasoning
Refer to any concepts, tools or opportunities on offer in the lead up to this communication task (e.g., as part of pre-work, lectures and/or workshops). What impact did they have on the way you approached this task? What did you learn from watching other students present?

Reconstructing
If you were asked to complete a similar task in the future, how might this current experience help you? Are there things that you would do the same? Differently? What additional support material or opportunities might assist you? What is your main take-away from this communication experience?

Example 2: Adapted version of the 4-Rs scale of reflection (Ryan & Ryan, 2013)

Conclusion

This research originated from a place of curiosity. As an experienced practitioner, I wanted to further understand PSA in an educational setting to support positive student outcomes. From the outset, I was no stranger to this phenomenon as I had witnessed it in my classroom, and talked about it with students, on numerous occasions. As part of my Project 1 literature review, I identified the volume of research that has been undertaken on PSA, from a range of disciplinary perspectives. However, as scholarship in this area is rich and diverse, it is difficult to navigate in terms of direct classroom application. Through this research, I sought a more in-depth analysis in a natural setting. To do this, I deployed an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) to explore how PSA is recognised and experienced in a first-year, university oral communication unit. My DCI research has broader application as PSA is a phenomenon that affects many people in a range of educational and life contexts. In concluding that this phenomenon is complex, prevalent, individual and unstable, eight principles emerged from this initial project to guide educators in teaching, learning and incorporating an oral assessment task in any unit of study.

Project 2 detailed a new framework of support. The Sustainable Speaking Practices Framework (SSPF) is comprised of the eight principles from Project 1 and underpinned by key tenets from SCT (Bandura, 1986). As a guiding theoretical perspective for this framework, SCT offers a valuable practical lens to identify ways to strengthen and support personal agency. In particular, the constructs of self-regulation, self-observation and self-reflection encourage a proactive approach to learning where students can set goals of personal significance and monitor progress. This research illuminates the unstable component of PSA, which means there is the potential for varying levels of fear within and between presentations. To address this, it is imperative that students exercise some control over their

learning to be able to move from one presentation to the next. This extends to selecting, modifying and changing actions to meet desired outcomes (Bandura, 2009). Most importantly, a focus on strategy use, rather than perceived personal failings, enables students to learn from both positive and negative experiences. My DCI research recognises that supporting oral presentations for assessment in the wider university context can be difficult due to large cohorts of students, overall unit requirements, time restrictions and instructor expertise. Therefore, the SSPF offers practical support for educators while emphasising the oral nature of this type of assessment. In recognising that the *speaker* is the only constant from one speaking task to the next, this framework stresses the need for continued personal growth. In this way, each oral assessment task is part of an overall continuum that supports the ongoing process of building sustainable speaking practices.

As part of the SSPF, a new model of instruction was developed. The *integrated model for oral presentations* provides both theoretical and practical support. Most importantly, this model recognises that PSA is a fear of speaking in front of others, and therefore the spoken component of any oral presentation for assessment must be prioritised. While this model provides necessary instructional support, it is only the first step. Through repeated opportunities to present in front of others, it is hoped that public speaking will become less of a threat. However, some students require additional support to come to new understandings about their capabilities in this area. For example, a student who identifies as highly anxious may benefit from more opportunities to speak than can be offered in a unit of study. Alternatively, a student who is less anxious about speaking in front of others may still struggle when asked to reconsider a preferred mode of delivery (i.e., moving from a script to a speaking outline). Again, this relates to the individual nature of PSA and the need for active

involvement on behalf of the learner to understand and manage their experiences with this phenomenon.

This framework puts forward an alternative approach to traditional methods of support across a semester of study. Drawing on Zimmerman's model of SRL (2000), the original three phases of forethought, performance and reflection have been reconceptualised as *Understanding self and task*, *Learning through engagement*, and *Responding to effort*. The cyclical nature of SRL encourages students to keep working on learning goals (Zimmerman, 2000). However, this requires a well-designed learning environment that allows students to make connections between past, present and future speaking opportunities. I have created a number of activities and video resources as a practical application of this research. These resources do not offer a definitive or prescriptive approach to supporting oral presentations for assessment but demonstrate one way the SSPF can be used in action. In addition, they offer strategies that can be applied from one task to the next. For example, tips on extemporaneous speaking included in *Learning through engagement* and self-reflection questions listed as part of *Responding to effort* may prove helpful with future presentations while at university and beyond.

This DCI research has identified time restrictions and the need for emotional processing as potential challenges when supporting students in a university context. In short, some students need more time to reflect on and, potentially, reframe thoughts and feelings associated with speaking in front of others. Again, Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) recognises individual differences and provides a necessary focus on 'self' to equip students to build public speaking knowledge, skills and self-belief. In recognising that PSA can influence a speaker in both the short and long-term, the overall aim of the SSPF is to promote public speaking self-efficacy.

In this way, students can initiate and revise personal management strategies from one speaking opportunity to the next, including outside of any assessment task. This aligns with the merits of life-long learning and the inclusion of communication skills on university lists of graduate capabilities. Consequently, oral presentations for assessment should be considered as a 'moment in time' level of achievement rather than a conclusive indicator of speaking ability. Although students can gauge current progress from stated marking criteria, they should also be invited to consider how these experiences assist in their quest to become more proficient speakers.

The SSPF challenges a one-sized-fits-all management option, favouring instead a number of effective learning and teaching practices to foster positive self-efficacy beliefs. In this way, each individual oral assessment piece is seen to inform the next rather than being viewed in isolation. Specifically, this research highlights the importance of reducing uncertainty around all parts of the speech-making process. As Witt and Behnke (2006) state, "if speakers are unsure of themselves and uncertain about how they will perform in a public speaking context, it stands to reason that speech-related anxiety will result" (p. 170). The SSPF does not seek to eliminate feelings of PSA but rather to empower students to understand themselves as speakers. This has practical implications for the planning, implementing and grading of oral presentations in the academy. The findings conclude that oral assessment has the potential to be a very worthwhile learning experience, but where used, it must be fully supported.

Outside of classroom use, key findings and resources from this DCI research can be applied to other instructional endeavours. For example, encouraging sustainable speaking practices is also a positive way of running any professional development sessions dealing with oral communication. Therefore, in addition to sharing this research and framework with other

academics, key findings will also be included in current workshops that I run with people working in both the private and public sector. PSA is non-discriminatory; it affects not only students but also the general population, and there is scope to develop targeted workshops in this area. This DCI research provides a strong base for such development, which includes looking for additional ways for speakers to engage in purposeful practice sessions incorporating both face-to-face and online learning spaces. In keeping with the iterative nature of this research, the next stage is to share this framework with others and actively seek feedback.

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Appendices

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Appendix A

Reframing a 'plan, present and reflect' approach to speaking drawing on Zimmerman's (2000) SRL model

Forethought (Task analysis and self-motivation)	**Volition/performance** (Reimagining word 'performance' from an end product to a process, which includes preparation)	**Reflection**
• What is the speaking task? • What are your initial feelings about the task? • How does it relate to past experiences? • How do you see/understand yourself as a speaker? • In terms of an academic exercise, what do you need to do to complete this speaking task? • What are your personal goals for this task? (Linked to self as speaker) • What are some likely professional goals? (Likely speaking opportunities in future careers?) • What support material is available to you? Where can you go to find out more? • How can you best plan to complete this task? (Considering proximal and distal goals in relation to planning) • How can you lessen confusion about the requirements of this task? • What are some positive consequences that accompany the completion of this task? Question: What are your short-term goals (proximal) and longer-term goals (distal)? In addition to completing an assessment piece, how can this task assist you in developing confidence and competence in speaking a message?	• How can you enact a plan of action? What support is on offer to help with this? What is the first thing to do? • In light of personal goals in relation to speaking a message, what can you be doing now (or during the assessment task) to address these? • Who is available to answer questions? Where can you go for help? • How can you learn from others? (Tutors? Students? Other speakers?) • What will help you to stay focused on the task? How are you keeping a record of what you are doing? As you move through the task, how are you feeling? • Are your current strategies working? • How are you considering the oral component of this task? What are you doing to assist in 'revealing your content through oral delivery'? • How is this task challenging past experiences or beliefs about speaking? • What are you learning about your ability to speak a message? • How are you practising, and what are you learning from these sessions? How will this be different to the actual presentation day? What could you be doing to make it more realistic? • How is what you are doing connecting with criteria/marking elements? Question: How are you using the time available to prepare to present a message? How are you meeting the needs of the task as well as your ability to speak a message in front of others?	• What were you thinking or feeling before presenting your talk? • Did you still think or feel this way during your talk? • What were you thinking or feeling at the end of your talk? • Did you approach this piece in the same manner as previous presentations? Did that work for this piece? Were the requirements the same as previous speaking opportunities? • What are some things you did well on the day of delivery? • Thinking back on your preparation, what did you do that worked particularly well for this piece? • Thinking back on your preparation, is there something else you could have done that would have helped you? • What are some strategies that you could take from this experience that might help with future speaking tasks? • What did you learn the most from this piece? Question: Overall, what have you taken away from this speaking task? What is one thing you want to remember next time you are called on to speak?

Appendix B

Sustainable Speaking Practices Framework (SSPF) summary

The overall aim of the Sustainable Speaking Practices Framework (SSPF) is to support positive student outcomes in relation to oral communication and oral presentations in higher education. The SSPF is comprised of the eight guiding principles from Project 1 and includes a new model to support instruction (*The integrated model for oral presentations*). In order to establish, maintain and sustain continued growth, key constructs from Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) underpin this new framework. These include a focus on Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) and self-reflection to build public speaking self-efficacy.

While the SSPF is grounded in theory, it offers practical ways to support student engagement with oral assessment from the moment a task is announced to after it has been completed. In this way, students are encouraged to learn from each experience. This is achieved through a reconceptualisation of Zimmerman's (2000) cyclical model of SRL. The following table provides an overview of the main ideas and video resources discussed in the final section of Project 2 – *Providing practical guidance for educators and students.*

<table>
<tr>
<td>Understanding self and task</td>
<td>Establishing importance

Why is an oral task included as an assessment item?

How does it relate to future speaking opportunities?

Reflecting on experience

How have past student experiences shaped current attitudes and abilities in terms of speaking in front of others?

Reducing uncertainty

What support structures are in place to enable students to better engage with the task?

• Sharing assessment expectations (Video 1)

Considering personal goals

How can this task assist in building public speaking self-efficacy?</td>
</tr>
</table>

Learning through engagement	**Providing ongoing support** What ongoing support structures are in place to enable students to continue engaging with the task? **Unpacking desired presentation skills** How are desired speaking attributes (or delivery requirements) understood and supported? • Explaining an extemporaneous approach to speaking (Video 2) • Extemporaneous speaking example (Video 3) • Manuscript speaking example (Video 4) • General feedback following an in-class formative assessment task (Video 5) • Speaking to camera (Video 6) **Increasing opportunities to present** What type of informal and formal learning opportunities are offered for students to work on personal goals? **Learning from others** What can be learnt from others? How can modelled behaviour add to a student's understanding of effective speaking skills?
Responding to effort	What can be learnt from this experience? (Are current strategies adequate in preparing for an oral assessment task?) What additional understandings (or support mechanisms) are needed to complete a similar task? How can this experience inform future experiences?

Appendix C

Excerpt from an FAQ sheet about an oral assessment task (created from student questions)

Can we use the same story for the formative task and Assessment 1?
You can use the same story if it works for both tasks. For the formative task, you are telling a story that helps to answer the following question: How I got to be where I am? Or Why I'm doing what I'm doing? This could be related to study, work or an interest. For Assessment 1, you are starting with a story and moving on to something you have learnt from that experience, or still learning from it. If you think your story can do both, then you are free to use the same one.

How personal does my story need to be?
This is an important question. Yes, you are asked to share a personal story but that simply means that it has happened to you. Remember, in this unit the focus is on context, purpose and audience. This means thinking about a story that is appropriate for the occasion. If you listen to the Week 2 lecture, Lesley shared a number of personal stories. They were important to her but (hopefully) did not shock the audience or make anyone feel uncomfortable. One of our tutors has listened to hundreds of oral presentations. Her advice is sound: If you have not shared this story before, now is not the time to share it (as part of an oral presentation for assessment).

Are there certain topics we should avoid?
This relates to the above question and answer. As mentioned in the lectures, you will have many opportunities to tell stories in your professional careers. A key consideration is to choose stories that are relevant and appropriate for the situation. In this unit we are mindful of both speaker and audience. That is, in a cohort of close to 600 students, we are aware that students will have different attitudes, beliefs and experiences. In planning your story, think about your workshop group, think about the overall task, think about what you are sharing and why? It may be that your initial story idea, while very important to you, is better shared in a different context. If you have doubts, then talk with your tutor. For Assessment 1, you are asked to provide a summary of your topic on a class padlet wall (available on BB under Assessment).

I'm struggling to find a story about myself that is very interesting. What are some strategies for making a simple story engaging and interesting for the audience?
An engaging story is often a simple story. The story builder can help you to think about what key ideas need to be considered. Too much or too little information can leave your audience confused. As mentioned, it doesn't need to be a big, bold story but rather something that is relevant to you. The story format allows you to take your audience through a series of connected events. If you are finding it difficult to think of a story, use the activity from Workshop 1 as a guide. Think about different times in your life related to education, work, location or general interest. Jot down a number of ideas and brainstorm each one. For

example, one student thought about selecting subjects at her high school. Because of timetable clashes, her choice of elective was limited to taking art in senior. This led to a very interesting talk. She had learnt two important things from this experience. First, that she had never thought of herself as 'arty' and that this subject had taken her outside of her comfort zone. Second, she had gained a new appreciation for art which she still values.

How strictly do I have to adhere to the story builder?
The story builder is provided as a guide. It includes a number of prompt questions that can help you to think through your story and how best to retell it to others. As mentioned in the Week 2 lecture, it is not necessary to make the middle elements (action/unexpectedness, highpoint and punchline) discrete sections. In other words, you do not have to force an answer for each section. The questions are there to help you progress your story. The last element (central point) can help you to reflect on what you have learnt from that experience.

What kind of supporting material can I use when I link my story to the present?
This is a very important consideration. Your story is an essential part of the presentation but it is not the only part. You are then asked to think about what you have learnt from this experience or are still learning. The Week 3 reading offers some thoughts about possible options for support material to back up some of your points. Naturally, you need to draw on the ones that work for you.

Do I have to give equal time to each section (past, present and future)?
No, it makes sense that you may spend more time on the past (story) and present (what I have learnt or are still learning). The conclusion (what this may mean for the future) may be shorter because the future hasn't happened yet. In this final section, you are speculating on what this might lead to, or mean, for you.

How do I plan my presentation if I don't write a script?
In CYB101 we are looking at a more sustainable approach to speaking. Writing out a full script every time you are asked to speak a message is very time consuming. It is also not necessary (or appropriate) in a number of speaking situations. We are recommending extemporaneous speaking (which is discussed below). As part of your planning process, you may create a preparation outline. This can be a more detailed outline that shows how you progress your message and how you will link from one idea to the next. On the day of delivery, we want you to use a speaking outline. A speaking outline is less detailed but still very well planned. It provides you with enough information to move through your message but is not a written script. To do this, you will need to rely on a tight structure. Your story will have an in-built structure – first this happened, followed by this. You have also been asked to use the overarching structure of past, present and future to move you (and your audience) from one section to the next.

Appendix D

In-class activity using a TRIPLESPEAK approach

Activity

Find a recent photo on your phone that includes at least one person. To begin, describe the context (where it was taken and who is in the photo). From there, answer the following three questions:

- What happened just before it was taken?
- What was happening while it was being taken?
- What happened immediately afterwards?

Speak your message to three different people. After each attempt, think about what worked well and what you might do differently next time. You may like to ask the other person for some feedback.

Example response

This is a picture of me and my two daughters in Vienna. It was taken last Christmas. Just before this photo was taken we had been eating at a restaurant. When we looked out the window we realised that what we thought was rain was actually snow. So, we raced outside and that was when this photo was taken. As you can tell, we were all really excited because we had been told it usually doesn't snow in Vienna at this time of year. Immediately after this photo we tried to have a bit of a snow-ball fight but there really wasn't enough. In the end, it got really cold so we went back into the restaurant.

Appendix E

Formative Assessment Checklist

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Use this checklist to keep on track when preparing for the formative task. Remember to:

- Start strongly.
- Provide enough background information to set up the story.
- Progress the story in a clear and coherent manner.
- Offer enough information to develop the action.
- Make an overall point.
- Finish with impact. / Leave a strong impression.

- Use language that was suitable for oral delivery.
- Include linking statements to keep speaker and audience on track.

- Use the speaking space effectively.
- Gesture naturally.
- Use notes as prompts only.

- Speak clearly.
- Speak at a meaningful pace.
- Use pauses wisely.
- Speak loudly enough for all to hear.
- Emphasise important words.
- Establish a natural rhythm.
- Avoid filler words (um, ahh, okay).

- Select a visual that supports spoken message.
- Display a professional visual (resolution, distortion, editing and simplicity).

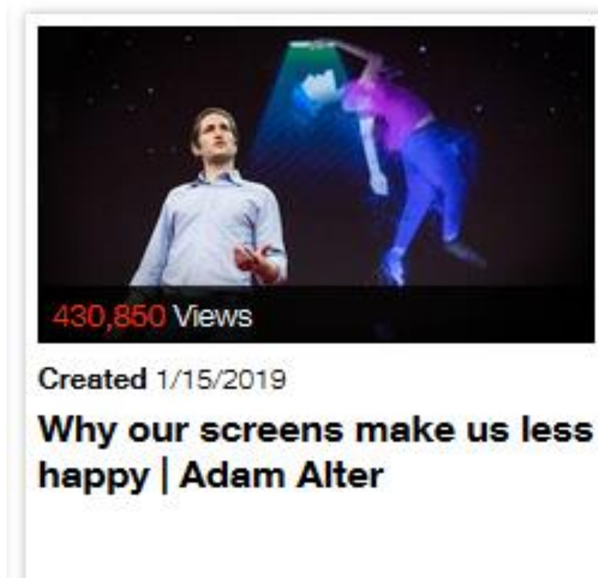
TUTOR FEEDBACK:

(Based on the above checklist)

Resource created in 2019 by **LESLEY IRVINE**, **ANNETTE STODDART**, & **T.J. THOMSON**

Appendix F

Example TED-Ed lesson for a communication unit dealing with supporting material



Instructions

Effective speakers do their research. In addition to deciding on the most important points to make, they also draw on credible and relevant supporting material to back up their ideas. These may include facts and statistics, quotes or experiences from others (sometimes called expert testimony), stories and examples, which may be personal or attributed to someone else. After watching Adam Alter's TED-Ed talk (Why our screens make us less happy) provide a brief answer to the following questions:

Questions

1. What were Alter's main points?
2. What type/s of supporting material did he use?
3. How did he use this material to back up his argument/progress a line of reasoning?

Appendix G

Sharing stories connected with PSA (article)
This is a prototype for a series of articles about building speaker competence and confidence

QUT lecturer Lesley Irvine joined her school's debating team in Year 9.

And she remembers clearly one of her earliest debates.

"As I sat behind a row of wooden tables waiting for my turn to speak, I didn't realise that I had been unconsciously shuffling my palms cards," said Lesley.

"I soon found out when I stood in front of the audience and looked down at my first card – I froze."

Fortunately for Lesley, the adjudicator sensed that something was wrong and told her to take a few minutes to get organised and start when ready.

"Even now, I can remember feeling extremely self-conscious and unsure of what to do," she said.

"However, it was a long time ago and I certainly don't dwell on it or 'recall' it every time I am asked to speak in public now.

This has to be a good thing considering her current role is as a lecturer in speech communication.

But she knows that there are many similar stories.

"I often talk with students about trying to reframe a negative speaking experience. That is, finding something constructive to learn from it and then letting the rest go.

"When I think back to my Year 9 experience, my main memory is of the adjudicator and how she helped me to keep on debating.

"Her simple act of giving me a little time, and speaking in an encouraging manner, was more beneficial than being told not to shuffle my cards – something I learnt on my own thanks to that experience."

Lesley said that when it comes to speaking in front of others, she has had a number of supportive people on her side.

"Just over 12 years ago, I gave my first lecture at QUT," she said.

"I had spoken in front of others before but this was my first university lecture and I felt nervous.

"When I get nervous, I can feel a bit of tightness in the throat and knot in the stomach.

"However, on this day, I believe my nerves were more to do with unhelpful thoughts.

"I had spent a great deal of time preparing; I knew the content and had included a number of short video examples but wondered if it would be enough?

"Also, the Unit Coordinator was in the room and so I wanted to make a good impression.

"At the end of the lecture, the Unit Coordinator came up and started by saying all the things that had gone well.

"She then mentioned some things that I might like to think about next time.

"One thing she said was to make sure I let my audience know where I am taking them and to make some stronger links between ideas.

"For example, she told me that when I introduced a short video, I needed to make it clear why I was showing it and what I hoped the audience might focus on."

Lesley said that this was very useful advice.

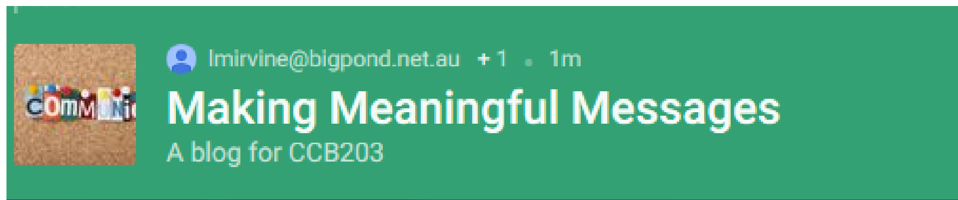
"It made me think about all the preparation that I had put into this one-hour lecture. The audience had not been privy to that preparation.

"As this was the first time they were hearing this particular message – it made sense that I needed more links to show how it all fitted together."

The patience of the adjudicator and constructive feedback from the Unit Coordinator have influenced the way Lesley speaks and teaches today.

Appendix H

Sharing stories connected with PSA (blog post)



It's all about the recovery

In the 1990s, there were two Australian tennis players called Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde. They played doubles and were called *The Woodies*. As a newsreader at a Brisbane radio station, I wrote the following line:

The Woodies will continue their winning run at Wimbledon this weekend.

That's what I wrote but it's not what I said on air. Instead, I said:

The Woodies will continue their 'wimming wum...'

What I had done was to write myself a tongue twister. It wasn't a long sentence but it certainly contained some tricky consonant combinations. What do you do when you make a mistake? Well, in my case, it was a matter of slowing down, pausing and saying part of the message again so that it could be understood. This often includes a simple word or phrase that helps to get you back on track. For me that word was 'rather'. So, let's try that again:

The Woodies will continue their wimming wum, rather, their winning run at Wimbledon this weekend.

We can all trip up on a word, lose our train of thought for a moment or say something in a way that doesn't quite make sense. It is not a pleasant feeling but the key take away here is what can you do to get yourself back on track? In short, it's about the recovery, not the mistake.

Via a padlet wall embedded in an online learning site