

A PILOT STUDY OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AS A PREDICTOR OF
IMAGINED INSTRUCTIONAL INTERACTIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE
STUDENTS

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A Pilot Study Communication Apprehension as a Predictor of Imagined Instructional Interactions for Second Language Students

Communication apprehension has been extensively studied within the field of communication, often outstripping the research impact of other prominent communication constructs (Sawyer, 2018). The scope of research regarding communication apprehension indicates that understanding the nature of social anxiety is important to many areas of communication. Research in communication apprehension covers a variety of topics, including public speaking instruction and intercultural communication, demonstrating the prominence of communication apprehension in everyday life (Sawyer, 2018). Communication apprehension is linked to both cognitive (Ayres, 1990) and psychological perceptions (Ayres, 1986). Communication apprehension is conceptualized as the levels of anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication (McCroskey, 1977). An important piece of this conceptualization is the mention of anticipated communication, as anxiety regarding future communication can be just as powerful as anxiety during the interaction itself. Anticipated anxiety is particularly important in performance, as anticipating an event may cause even more anxiety for the event itself (Beatty, Kruger, & Springhorn, 1976).

Imagined interactions are a cognitive process where actors imagine an anticipated encounter and imagine themselves in a future interaction (Honeycutt, 2003). The majority of imagined interactions occur before real events (Edwards, Honeycutt, & Zagacki, 1990). Individuals then, can focus on future conversations through their imagination as a way to rehearse important conversations (Honeycutt, 2010). There are practical applications for the use of imagined interactions in instructional contexts, including the ability for students to reduce

some of the anxiety regarding classroom experiences and anticipated communication with teachers or other students.

Students experience many types of apprehension in the classroom (McCroskey, 1990). Specifically, negative outcomes associated with apprehension in the classroom include decreased learning and poor performance. (Ayres, 1990; Ayres; 1992). Due to these negative outcomes, students with high anxiety in the classroom may not be as successful as others with lower levels of anxiety. This research assumes a predominately English-speaking sample. Second language, or L2 students specifically face the challenge of experiencing apprehension when communicating in their second language (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Factors such as language distance and fear of speaking in English increase anxiety in L2 students who do not want to risk communicating in English (Mak & White, 1996). The use of imagined interactions, then, could provide a tool for L2 students to practice their interactions with their native speaking instructors to help lower their apprehension.

In the present study I examined how L2 students use imagined interactions under conditions of anticipatory anxiety and teacher immediacy. I anticipated that students would report greater anxiety when they receive lower grades on a preceding assignment and lower anxiety when getting higher than expected grades. Moreover, L2 students will experience more apprehension when tasked to communicate in English, particularly with native English speakers. Teacher immediacy will also have a negative association with anticipatory anxiety. That is, L2 students will report lower anticipatory anxiety when communicating with high immediacy teachers but will report higher anticipatory anxiety when communicating with low immediacy teachers. As a result, L2 students will use imagined interactions as a means of preparing for conversations with their L1 instructors.

Theoretical Perspective

Communication Apprehension in L2 Students

Communication apprehension is conceptualized in two ways, trait and state anxiety. Trait anxiety specifically is individual differences in the extent to which different people are characterized by anxiety states and by prominent defenses against said anxiety (Spielberger, 1966). Trait anxiety is used to describe individual differences in anxiety (Spielberger, 1966), and can vary based on personality traits (McCroskey, Daly, & Sorenson, 1976). Trait anxiety is most commonly measured using McCroskey's (1970) PRCA-24 scale. In contrast, state anxiety describes a temporary state regarding a specific event (Sawyer & Behnke, 2001). State anxiety specifically relies on psychological outcomes. Previous research suggests that trait anxiety is harder to modify, while state anxiety is much more susceptible to change (Sawyer & Behnke, 1999). The distinction between state and trait anxiety has proven to be a reliable way to study communication apprehension in instructional settings.

Previous research in instructional communication places communication apprehension in a public speaking context. Students experience public speaking anxiety based on the assignment type (Witt & Behnke, 2006), or the conditions of the audience (Beatty, Behnke, & McCallum, 1978). One important finding is the change in anxiety over specific milestones during a public speaking event. Behnke and Sawyer (1999) demonstrate that, in these public speaking contexts, the highest levels of psychological state anxiety occur immediately before the speech is about to begin (Behnke & Sawyer, 1999). This finding indicates the importance of studying anticipatory anxiety in instructional contexts. These findings regarding anticipatory anxiety in public speaking contexts should translate to interpersonal, instructional relationships. Understanding anticipatory anxiety specifically can aid in understanding the anxiety students feel regarding a

specific event, such as the lead-up to a conversation with a professor or instructor. For example, anxiety is often higher before interactions (Behnke & Sawyer, 1998), suggesting that state anxiety plays an important role in understanding anticipatory anxiety regarding communicative encounters in the classroom.

Communication apprehension plays several roles in a classroom setting. High apprehension in the classroom can lead to lower performance in smaller classes (McCroskey, 1990). Specifically, in smaller classrooms, apprehension may inhibit students' abilities to interact with teachers (McCroskey, 1976). This indicates that apprehensive students may learn less because they do not interact with instructors or participate in class discussions. In addition to interpersonal interactions and class participation, students who have difficulty with communication have more anxiety when giving speeches, and negative outcomes of high apprehension in the classroom also include poor performance and negative thoughts regarding communication (Ayres, 1990; 1992). Voluntary communication within the classroom is also a commonly cited cause of apprehension within the classroom (McCroskey, 1990).

Communication apprehension also has negative outcomes on self-esteem, as there is a negative relationship between communication apprehension and self-esteem (McCroskey, Daley, Richmond, & Falcione, 1977). Communication apprehension has several negative outcomes for classroom communication. This research assumes an L1 focus, meaning the majority of participants in this research use English as their first language. Understanding the differences for L2 students should provide tools for instructor to better help the reduction of communication apprehension for students who are learning English as a second language.

L2 students face the added challenge of communicating in a second language. Research has suggested that speaking in the second language causes communication apprehension among

these students. Foreign language anxiety is related to potential lack of comprehension and fear of negative evaluation (Horowitz, 1986). Mak and White (1996), for example, found that voluntary speaking and the distance between their native language and English were the most commonly cited reasons for apprehension in the ESL classroom for Chinese students in an English-speaking classroom. Liu and Jackson (2008) found that many students were unwilling to risk using English in interpersonal conversations, and that using English created anxiety in one-third of the students in a Chinese classroom. While these studies focus on the classroom as a whole, there is a possibility that these same findings should translate for interpersonal interactions with their instructors. High levels of apprehension may inhibit students from communicating with their instructors (McCroskey, 1976). Imagined interactions provide a potential avenue for L2 students to cognitively practice anticipated interpersonal interactions with their native-speaking instructors.

Teacher Immediacy and Grade Discrepancy

Teacher immediacy behaviors offer an important area of scholarly research in instructional communication. Mehrabian (1971) indicated that immediacy behaviors lead to a feeling of closeness between communicators, as well as to a perception of connectedness. Frymier & Houser (2000) further the discussion by demonstrating that immediacy behaviors can alter students' perceptions of their relationships with their instructors. Immediacy behaviors can be performed both verbally and non-verbally. Examples of verbal immediacy behaviors include humor, calling students by their names, and conveying examples from their personal lives (Gorham, 1988). Examples of non-verbal immediacy behaviors include eye gaze, posture, movement, and vocal variety (Anderson, 1979). Specifically, humor and smiling are highly rated behaviors (Akif Sözer, 2019), suggesting that both verbal and non-verbal behaviors continue to

be important to students as effective teacher immediacy behaviors. High teacher immediacy has been linked to several positive aspects, including increases in affective learning behaviors and student motivation (Allen, Witt, & Wheelless, 2006; Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004) and instructor credibility (Schrodt & Witt, 2006; Witt & Kerssen-Griep, 2011).

Teacher immediacy behaviors have a relationship to communication apprehension in the classroom. Receiver apprehension has a negative relationship to instructional outcomes (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001), demonstrating that apprehension specifically inhibits students' performance in the classroom, as well as communicating with the instructor. Frymier (1993) indicates that communication apprehension has a negative effect on students' motivation to study. This study also found that there was a small increase in motivation when a teacher shows high immediacy behaviors. Chesebro (2003) examined the role of non-verbal immediacy on apprehension and affect, finding that non-verbal immediacy increased students' affect for the instructor and the class. These results have specific implications for the L2 students in the English-speaking classroom. L2 students specifically cite voluntary communication as a source of apprehension in their English-speaking classrooms (Mak & White, 1996) and are often unwilling to risk using English in interpersonal conversations due to their high levels of anxiety (Liu & Jackson, 2008). It stands to reason, then, that high teacher immediacy may reduce the levels of anxiety in L2 students.

The student-teacher relationship is a unique interpersonal relationship that students develop during their time in college, therefore understanding student perceptions of these relationships is important for educators' communicative behaviors with students. Students have several motivations for communicating with instructors, including relational reasons, functional reasons, and to provide excuses for work (Martin, Myers, & Mottet, 1999), demonstrating that an

understanding of teacher immediacy behaviors can help instructors communicatively navigate these reasons in a successful way. L2 students specifically provide a different angle, based on language barriers and high apprehension based on that language barrier, providing an interesting new area of research in this area.

Grades are an extremely important element of the educational process because they are central to the assessment of student learning (Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003), and are the primary way students gauge their success in their courses (Pollio & Beck, 2000). Students discuss their grades with instructors for several reasons, including learning goals, persuading, and fighting with instructors (Sabee & Wilson, 2005) as well as upward influence in educational outcomes (Wright, 2012). Conversations about grades are anxiety-inducing for students, and one of those reasons is perceived grade discrepancy. Griffin (2004) found that grade discrepancy is negatively associated with all instructional dimensions. This finding indicates that students mentally punish instructors when expected grades were lower than deserved. Similarly, students experience emotional distress when they expect to receive “C” grades (Poborskii et al., 2009). This perception demonstrates that grade discrepancy increases anxiety when the perceived discrepancy is high. Students also put more effort into their course work when the discrepancy between their actual and ideal performance is high. This is referred to as the *goal-performance discrepancy* (Gregory & Levy, 2015). These types of discrepancies pose an interesting area of communication research, as high discrepancies between an anticipated goal and actual performance may cause an increase in apprehension in instructional settings.

Receiving feedback on course work is an important piece of the grading process. Communication scholars focus on feedback interventions as a way to communicate feedback more successfully. One specific element of feedback interventions is feedback sensitivity, or the

individual differences in processing relevant information (Edwards & Pledger, 1990). Research demonstrates that sensitivity to negative explanatory style can increase anxiety in public speaking contexts (Kopecky, Sawyer, & Benkhe, 2004). Due to L2 students' high anxiety in instructional settings, it stands to reason they may have higher feedback sensitivity, and potential higher discrepancy between their actual performance and goals.

Imagined Interactions

Previous research conceptualizes the use of imagined interactions in regard to six major functions (Honeycutt, 2010). These functions are catharsis, compensation, conflict-linkage, rehearsal, relational maintenance, and self-understanding. The most important of these functions is rehearsal, which suggests that imagined interactions are used to mentally prepare for an interaction before it happens (Honeycutt, 2010). The rehearsal function is the most commonly cited use of imagined interactions in daily life. (Honeycutt, Vickery, & Hatcher, 2015). This makes sense, as the use of rehearsal can help reduce anxiety and uncertainty regarding communicative interactions by allowing individuals to think about the possible outcomes of the interactions ahead of time. Imagined interactions have also been studied in the context of two uses, proactively or retroactively. Proactive imagined interactions are used before a communication event (Honeycutt, 2010). Imagined interactions are more often used proactively over extended lengths of time (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1990; Honeycutt, Vickery, & Hatcher, 2015). Consequently, imagined interactions provide students with tools to practice their potential interactions with others; however, apprehension may play a role in the perceived success of their interaction.

Discrepancy in imagined interactions refers to the differences between the imagined interaction and the actual communication encounter. Weaker communicators find more

discrepancy between IIs and actual encounters (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1990).

Honeycutt, Choi, and DeBerry (2009) found that as the amount of communication apprehension increases, the amount of discrepancy between the imagined interaction and the actual encounter increases. L2 students who experience more apprehension may use imagined interactions as a way to rehearse their interaction with their instructor. If that interaction does not go the way the student planned, those with higher levels of apprehension may experience more discrepancy between the imagined and actual interactions.

Scholars have examined imagined interactions and communication apprehension to explore several facets of communication. In the context of instructional communication, the use of imagined interactions has been studied in the context of public speaking situations. The use of imagined interactions can improve vocal disfluency in public speaking situations (Choi, Honeycutt, & Bodie, 2015). Choi, Honeycutt, and Bodie (2015) also found that imagined interaction training in public speaking situations can reduce nervousness to ensure sufficient delivery. While these findings apply to a public speaking context, these results should hold in interpersonal contexts. These findings also assume that speakers are native English speakers and could be different for L2 students due to increased apprehension when communicating in the second language (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Increased communication apprehension based in language distance and voluntary speaking in interpersonal interactions with an instructor (Mak & White, 1996) may also play a role. Imagined interactions specifically have been shown to help bilingual learners develop their own learning strategies in their second language (Gendrin, 2009), suggesting this skill is a useful tool for non-English speaking students to make sense of their second language.

The majority of imagined interactions take place before communication encounters as a means of rehearsal and catharsis, therefore it stands to reason that anxious L2 students will use this strategy to practice for interaction with their instructors. Anxiety patterns can differ from person to person, and this assumes that the same can be said for L2 students with moderating levels of anxiety. The amount of apprehension felt leading up to a communicative act may increase the potential use of IIs for several different functions. Based on previous research, the following hypotheses were developed:

H₁: There is a positive association between regulatory fit and state anxiety.

H₂: There is a negative association between teacher immediacy and state anxiety.

H₃: There is a positive association between regulatory fit and students' use of imagined interactions for rehearsal, self-awareness, and catharsis.

Method

Participants

L2 students were recruited from basic communication courses offered by a large, private university located in the southwestern region of the United States ($N=36$). Eligible participants were over the age of 18, spoke any language other than English as their first language, and were enrolled in courses where English was the primary language of instruction. Eleven of these participants self-identified as first-year students, 14 as sophomores, 2 as juniors, 7 and seniors, and 2 as members of the university's intensive English program. The average age for this group was 20.89 (3.53) years. Nineteen of these participants self-identified as Latina/o, 10 as Asian, 3 as Middle Eastern, and 4 were of mixed ethnicity. First languages listed by these participants were Spanish ($n = 21$), Vietnamese ($n = 4$), Kinyarwanda ($n = 2$), Korean ($n = 2$), Mandarin ($n = 2$), Dutch ($n = 1$), Italian ($n = 1$), Kirundi ($n = 1$), Latvian ($n = 1$), and Somali ($n = 1$).

Procedure

After obtaining IRB approval and participants' informed consent, students voluntarily completed an online questionnaire. First, demographic questions were administered, assessing which language they spoke, as well as how often participants dream in their native language. All participants were tasked with writing a brief essay meant to induce vigilance. Participants were then randomly assigned into four conditions. Participants were exposed to prevention focused vignettes meant to induce anxiety, based on regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997; 2012). The vignettes described a scenario in which the participant had given a speech and received a grade for a speech assignment in their public speaking class. Each vignette was specific to each combination of grade discrepancy (low vs. high) and teacher immediacy (low vs. high). Finally, participants were administered a questionnaire assessing state anxiety and instructional imagined interaction usage. Participants received extra course credit for their participation in the survey and were thanked for their participation.

Measures

Cultural Integration: Cultural integration was measured in the demographic section to assess students' assimilation into their culture and language. Using a 3 item 1- to 7-point Likert scale, students were asked questions such as "How often do you dream in your native language" and "How often do you dream in English." This measure was deemed reliable ($\alpha=.79$).

Regulatory Focus Induction: To induce prevention focus, students were asked to write a brief essay describing their duties and obligations they had to their families in their childhood. Previous research has used this technique successfully to induce prevention focus (Fritas & Higgins, 2002; Sawyer, Ritchey, & Goen, 2019). Second, to induce anxiety participants were

exposed to one of four vignettes describing a speech given in their public speaking class, with the grade helping determine if they keep a scholarship.

State Anxiety: To measure state anxiety, the STAI measure (Spielberger, 1983) was used. This scale consisted of 20 items meant to measure state anxiety level using a 1- 4 point Likert scale, with 1 being “not at all” and 4 being “very much so.” Sample questions included “I felt self-confident” and “I felt pleasant.” This measure was deemed reliable ($\alpha = .96$)

Imagined Interaction Use: To measure imagined interaction usage, Berkos et al.’s (2001) students’ Imagined Interactions with Teachers scale was used. This scale consisted of 27 items for each function of imagined interactions using a 1- to 7-point Likert scale with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 7 being “strongly agree.” Sample questions included, “In order to prepare for an important conversation with this particular teacher, I would use imagined interactions to plan what I would say” and “In an effort to relieve tension or anxiety about this teacher, I would rely on imagined interactions.” The overall measure was deemed reliable ($\alpha=.94$). In addition, each subscale for this measure was also deemed reliable, with the alphas for each subscale as follows, rehearsal, ($\alpha=.88$), self-awareness ($\alpha=.86$), and catharsis ($\alpha=.89$).

Results

Manipulation Check

The following procedures were used to confirm that the study materials induce differing levels of affect. A separate sample of native English speakers (L1) students were recruited from sections of a basic communication course offered by a large private university in the southwest ($N=60$). All 60 participants completed the same prevention focus induction as described above. Thirty of these participants were assigned to the negative grading condition by random assignment procedures and the remaining 30 participants were assigned to the negative grading

discrepancy condition. Afterwards, all participants completed the pleasantness subscale of Mano’s (1997) measure of affect. This measure was selected because of its performance in previous studies of instructional feedback (Kluger, 2001; Kluger, Lewinsohn, & Aiello, 1994). Reliability for this scale in this study was good ($\alpha = .92$). According to Regulatory Fit Theory (RFT: Higgins, 2012), prevention focus students will experience less pleasant moods after receiving negative feedback than when they receive positive feedback. Students in the present study who received lower grades than they expected reported lower pleasantness ($M = 19.03$, $S.D. = 11.45$) than those that received higher than expected grades ($M = 44.77$, $S. D. = 11.08$). A one-way ANOVA computed for these data was significant ($F_{1,58} = 78.04$, $p = .05$) and confirmed that the induction procedures were consistent with RFT and induced differing levels of affect.

Data Analysis and Results

The data were analyzed using *Stata Statistical Software: Release 16* (Statcorp, 2019). Hierarchical regression was used to test hypotheses one and two. There was support for these hypotheses. A summary of results appears in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting L2 Students State Anxiety (N = 36)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
CI Total	-.50	0.45	-.19	-0.68	0.42	-.25	-.64	0.39	-.24
RF Fit				5.94	2.14	.43**	5.91	2.01	.43**
Immediacy							-9.44	3.97	-.34*
ΔR^2		.04			.18			.12	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2		1.24			7.70**			5.66*	

Note: Cultural Integration (CI Total) was centered at its mean. $R^2 = .34$ ($F_{3, 32} = 5.38$, $p < .01$)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Hierarchical regression for state anxiety was run as a function of prevention regulatory fit (vigilance) and teacher immediacy when controlled for cultural integration. There is a positive association ($\beta = .43$) between regulatory fit and state anxiety ($F_{3, 32} = 5.38, p < .01$; Change $R^2 = .34$). Moreover, there is a negative association ($\beta = -.33$) between teacher immediacy and state anxiety, supporting hypothesis 2 ($F_{1, 31} = 5.36, p = .027$; Change $R^2 = .108$). The full model accounts for 37.41% of the variance in anticipatory state anxiety ($R^2 = .3741, F_{4, 31} = 4.63, p = .0048$).

To test L2 students' uses of imagined interactions, hierarchical regressions were first utilized to test the total use of imagined interactions. A summary of this analysis appears in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting L2s Rehearsal Imagined Interactions (N = 36)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β
CI Total	-.29	0.35	-.14	-0.30	0.36	-.15	-.311	0.36	-.15	-.37	0.38	-.18
RF Fit				0.51	1.83	.05	0.52	1.86	.05	1.11	2.11	.11
Immediacy							1.58	3.67	.08	0.64	4.03	.03
State Anxiety										-0.10	0.17	-.13
ΔR^2		.02			.002			.006			.01	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2		0.69			0.08			0.19			0.37	

Note: Cultural Integration (CI Total) and State Anxiety were centered at their means. $R^2 = .04$ ($F_{4, 31} = .32, p = .86, ns$)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

for L2 students. There is an inverse association ($\beta = -.51$, $F_{4, 31} = 2.66$, $p = .05$) between cultural integration and the total use of imagined interactions for L2 students. In addition to testing total imagined interaction use, hierarchical regressions were used to test each function of imagined interactions. Hierarchical regression analyses for rehearsal were not significant. A summary of these analyses appears in Table 3.

Table 3
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting L2s Self Awareness Imagined Interactions ($N = 36$)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β
CI Total	-.79	0.30	-.41*	-0.80	0.31	-.42*	-.79	0.31	-.41*	-.92	0.31	-.48*
RF Fit				0.32	1.58	.03	0.31	1.58	.03	1.56	1.74	.16
Immediacy							-3.37	3.13	-.17	-5.38	3.32	-.27
State Anxiety										-0.21	0.14	-.29
ΔR^2		.17			.001			.03			.06	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2		6.91*			0.04			1.16			2.43	

Note: Cultural Integration (CI Total) and State Anxiety were centered at their means. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.
 $R^2 = .257$ ($F_{4, 31} = 2.68$, $p < .05$)

However, a model predicting significant results for self-awareness imagined interactions (IIs) can be found in Table 4.

Table 4
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting L2s Catharsis Imagined Interactions ($N = 36$)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β
CI Total	-1.31	0.29	-.59**	-1.31	0.29	-.62**	-1.31	0.29	-.61**	-1.43	0.29	-.68**
RF Fit				2.04	1.48	.19	2.03	1.48	.19	3.33	1.61	.31*
Immediacy							-3.48	2.92	-.16	-5.57	3.07	-.26
State Anxiety										-0.22	0.13	-.28
ΔR^2		.35			.035			.03			.05	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2		18.42**			1.89			1.42			3.87	

Note: Cultural Integration (CI Total) and State Anxiety were centered at their respective means. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.
 $R^2 = .466$ ($F_{4, 31} = 6.75$, $p < .01$)

Specifically, cultural integration is negatively associated with having self-aware IIs ($\beta = -.48$). What this means is, those who are fully integrated into the host culture do not need to have self-aware IIs while those who are less integrated into the culture have a lot of IIs designed to enhance self-awareness. Finally, Table 5 reveals significant results for predicting cathartic IIs.

Table 5
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting L2s Imagined Interactions (N = 36)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE(B)	β
CI Total	-2.32	0.83	-.43**	-2.41	0.84	-.45**	-2.39	0.85	-.45**	-2.73	0.87	-.51**
RF Fit				2.87	4.33	.10	2.86	4.37	.10	6.01	4.86	.22
Immediacy							-5.27	8.65	-.10	-10.31	9.24	-.19
State Anxiety										-0.53	0.38	.27
ΔR^2		.188			.01			.01			.04	
F for change in R^2		7.89**			0.44			0.37			1.98	

Note: Cultural Integration (CI Total) and State Anxiety were centered at their respective means. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.
 $R^2 = .256$ ($F_{4,31} = 2.66, p = .0511$)

Again, cultural integration is negatively associated with catharsis ($\beta = -.68$), while regulatory fit is positively associated with cathartic IIs ($\beta = .31$) in support of the third hypothesis ($F_{4,31} = 6.75, p < .01$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between communication apprehension and imagined interaction usage among second language students (L2s) when planning to have conversations with their instructors, based on teacher immediacy behaviors and grade discrepancy. In the classroom, L2 students feel anxiety in the classroom for a variety of reasons. Apprehension in the classroom may inhibit students’ abilities to interact with teachers (McCroskey, 1976), and produce negative outcomes such also as poor performance and negative

thoughts regarding communication (Ayres, 1990; 1992). While communication apprehension in the classroom is most commonly studied in public speaking contexts, this study expands the body of knowledge in this area by shifting the focus to students' interpersonal interactions with their instructors when discussing a grade in their classes. Imagined interactions offer a potential avenue for reducing anxiety, as they have both rehearsal and catharsis functions (Honeycutt, 2010), and provide a tool for bilingual students to make sense of their new language (Gendrin, 2009).

By inducing prevention focus based on regulatory fit (Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 2012), students were able to feel anxiety regarding their grade on a speech that had implications for keeping and losing a scholarship. Because regulatory focus has moderating effects on anticipated emotions (Leone, Perugini, & Bagozzi, 2005) and grade discussions are often anxiety inducing for students, using these two together makes sense for testing anxiety in interpersonal discussions. Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted a positive association between anticipatory anxiety and regulatory fit, and a negative relationship between state anxiety and teacher immediacy. These hypotheses began to show support with a limited sample of participants. Hypothesis 3 predicted positive associations between regulatory fit and rehearsal, self-aware, and cathartic imagined interactions. Cultural integration emerged as a significant predictor of total imagined interaction use for L2 students, as well as self-aware and cathartic imagined interactions. Self-awareness imagined interactions may be a tool for students who do not feel as integrated into their culture. These results reveal that the less culturally integrated a person is, the more they use IIs to alleviate tension and anxiety in the form of catharsis as well as being more aware of their language deficiency. This is consistent with Gendrin's (2009) research, demonstrating that individuals who are newer in a culture are more aware of the language barriers they face, the more likely they will use self-awareness IIs to overcome that barrier. Additionally, results

indicate that regulatory fit is positively associated with catharsis IIs. This makes sense, as catharsis IIs are used to reduce anxiety (Gendrin, 2009; Honeycutt, 2010). Students who may not feel as culturally integrated and experience high anxiety may use catharsis IIs to help ease tension regarding their interactions.

Overall, the results demonstrate this model is sound when considering the role imagined interactions can play for anxious L2 students. With the inclusion of additional participants through more data collection, the study has the potential to further confirm the relationships between L2 students' use of imagined interactions and their anxiety when having conversations with their English-speaking instructors. The instructor-student relationship is an important interpersonal relationship for several reasons (Frymier & Houser, 2000), and understanding the role anxiety plays in conversations regarding grades, as well as the potential use of imagined interactions as a tool to help students, researchers can get a better picture of the overall instructional experience for L2 students in English taught classes.

Limitations and Future Research

This study cannot be evaluated without acknowledging its limitations. First, sample size is an obvious limitation, as the results were inconclusive. The sample size of 36 participants did not yield enough power to truly confirm our results, due to several challenges through the data collection process. To remedy this, more data will be collected in subsequent semesters in order to fully test this model and yield better results.

This study measures L2 students as a collective and does not split them up based on what specific language each student speaks. Future research could explore the relationships between each language, and more specifically language distance and anxiety as it relates to imagined interaction use. Mak and White (1996) demonstrate that language distance plays a role in the anxiety students feel when communication in the classroom setting in English. Language

distance represents the level of difference between English and the native language. Mak and White (1996) found that the distance between Chinese and English played an important role in students' communication apprehension in the classroom. Future studies regarding apprehension and L2 students could explore the role distance between English and other languages, such as Spanish or Vietnamese and its relationship to anxiety during interpersonal interactions with their students.

Finally, future researchers should continue to explore the ways culture and communication competence relate to communication apprehension and imagined interaction use for L2 students. This study specifically demonstrates the relationship between anxiety and grade discrepancy but does not account for factors such as cultural cues and communication competence as causes for their anxiety. Communication competence potentially plays a role in inducing anxiety for L2 students. Additionally, cultural cues may factor into anxiety, as some conversations may be considered rude in some cultures that are not in others (Mak & White, 1996). Cultural integration emerged as a significant variable in this study, future research could explore the role imagined interactions have as a tool for improving competence, and for catharsis regarding specific cultural differences students may feel apprehensive about.

Conclusion

Communication apprehension is a widely studied communication construct (Sawyer, 2018), but much of the focus in instructional contexts is in public speaking. Interpersonal relationships are important for student development (Frymier & Houser, 2000), and therefore must be studied in addition. Second language students feel anxious for many reasons, one of which is the anticipation of communication with their instructors regarding grades. Imagined interactions provide a tool for second language students to practice their interactions beforehand or offer the potential to provide catharsis to help reduce their anxiety. While bilingual students use imagined

interactions as a tool to help them make sense of a new language (Gendrin, 2009), imagined interactions provide even more potential benefit to the overall educational experience of L2 students.

Appendix-Study Materials

Survey of Student Attitudes Toward Instruction

Instructions: This study examines how students react to instruction in basic communication courses. There are four parts to this survey.

First, you will be asked to provide your name and some basic information about yourself. This helps us to track the participants in the study. Later we will delete your name from our data so we can protect your privacy.

Second, you will write a brief essay about yourself. This will help us to understand some of your responses better.

Last, you will read one of four hypothetical situations about instruction in basic communication courses.

Fourth you will complete a series of questions about how this situation would make you feel and how you would prepare for a conference with your instructor.

Demographic Information

Name: _____

Last Four Digits of Your TCU ID: ____ ____ ____ ____

Gender (Circle One)

Male Female

What is your age: _____

Please indicate your classification in school (Circle One):

- First Year Student/Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

Ethnicity. Place a check by the category below that best describes you.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| _____ American Indian or Alaska Native | _____ Asian or Pacific Islander |
| _____ Black or African American | _____ Latina/o or Hispanic |
| _____ Middle Eastern | _____ White or Caucasian |

responsibility to make high enough grades so that you will keep your scholarship.

You've recently presented a 7 – 10 minute informative speech worth 20% of your final course grade. Your course instructor gave you a **much lower grade** on the informative speech than you expected. As a result, it is now **more likely** that you will **lose** your scholarship.

When giving lectures, your instructor seems very tense, looks at the board or notes while talking, and stands behind the podium without moving around the room. Moreover, this teacher rarely makes eye contact with the class and is generally perceived by your fellow classmates as unfriendly and unapproachable.

Conference with your Instructor

Imagine that you've made an appointment with this instructor to discuss your speech grade.

How would this situation make you feel?

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each item and then write the appropriate value in the space provided to the left of each statement to indicate how you would feel about having a conference with this instructor. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer that seems to describe your feelings best. (1=**Not at all**; 2=**Somewhat**; 3=**Moderately so**; 4=**Very much so**).

1. _____ I felt calm.
2. _____ I felt secure.
3. _____ I was tense.
4. _____ I felt strained.
5. _____ I felt at ease.
6. _____ I felt upset.
7. _____ I worried over possible misfortune.
8. _____ I felt satisfied.
9. _____ I felt frightened.
10. _____ I felt comfortable.
11. _____ I felt self-confident.
12. _____ I felt nervous.
13. _____ I was jittery.

14. _____ I felt indecisive.
15. _____ I was relaxed.
16. _____ I felt content.
17. _____ I was worried.
18. _____ I felt confused.
19. _____ I felt steady.
20. _____ I felt pleasant.

Imagined Interactions with the Teacher

Very often people talk to themselves. Sometimes that talk includes what researchers call “imagined interactions.” This kind of self-talk involves mental conversations with a partner who may not even be physically present. Such mental conversations might occur before an actual conversation. Below are a series of statements about imagined interactions with teachers. Please indicate the extent to which you would do the following before having a conference about your speech grade with the teacher described above. Please use a seven point scale where 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Moderately Disagree; 3 = Slightly Disagree; 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree; 5 = Slightly Agree; 6 = Moderately Agree, and; 7 = Strongly Agree.

- _____ 1. In order to prepare for an important conversation with this particular teacher, I would use imagined interactions to plan what I would say.
- _____ 2. I think I would probably have a number of imagined interactions before I would interact with this particular teacher.
- _____ 3. I would not rehearse what I was going to say to this teacher; instead I would just say what I had to say.
- _____ 4. I would use imagined interactions to practice what I might say in upcoming interactions with a teacher of this type.
- _____ 5. I would not use imagined interactions ahead of time to plan conversations with this particular teacher.
- _____ 6. I would rarely use imagined interactions to prepare for upcoming encounters with this teacher.
- _____ 7. Before actually talking to this teacher, I would imagine my interaction first.
- _____ 8. Before going to class with this teacher, I would mentally rehearse what I would say in class.
- _____ 9. Before I would visit this teacher in her/his office, I would imagine how the conversation would go.
- _____ 10. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to better understand myself.
- _____ 11. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would help to clarify my thoughts and feelings about this teacher.
- _____ 12. I don't think that having imagined interactions with this teacher would help me

- figure out this teacher any better.
- _____ 13. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would go a long way toward understanding how I should (or should not) communicate with him/her.
- _____ 14. I don't see how imagined interactions would help me understand where this teacher is coming from.
- _____ 15. I do not believe that imagined interactions would help me get a better grasp of how I feel about this teacher.
- _____ 16. Imagined interactions with this particular teacher would help to reduce my uncertainty.
- _____ 17. Imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to better comprehend what I think and how I feel about him/her.
- _____ 18. Imagined interactions would enable me to understand my reactions to actual encounters with this teacher.
- _____ 19. Imagining an interaction with this teacher would help me get things off my chest.
- _____ 20. I would use imagined interactions to deal with stressful situations surrounding this teacher.
- _____ 21. In an effort to relieve tension or anxiety about this teacher, I would rely on imagined interactions.
- _____ 22. Imagined interactions would not help me to relieve tension or discomfort about this teacher.
- _____ 23. Imagined interactions do not help me get rid of unwanted emotions about this teacher.
- _____ 24. I would feel better if I could imagine an interaction where I told the teacher what I really thought about him/her.
- _____ 25. Imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to get over my frustrations about her/him.
- _____ 26. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would not help me feel any better.
- _____ 27. Imagined interactions with this teacher would only make me feel worse, not better.

This Completes the Survey. Thank you for your participation

Scenario 2 (Lower than Expected Grade x High Teacher Immediacy)

Grading Scenario

Imagine that you are enrolled in a public speaking course. Your goal this academic term is to make high enough grades to avoid losing the financial aid you need for tuition and other expenses. If you lose your scholarship you will probably need to drop out of school or go into great debt to pay for it. As a result, your future plans would be less certain and secure. This will also disappoint your family members who are counting on you to finish your education and get a well-paying job. Consequently, your strategy is to **avoid anything that can go wrong** and might stop you from realizing your responsibility to make high enough grades so that you will keep your scholarship.

You've recently presented a 7 – 10 minute informative speech worth 20% of your final course

grade. Your course instructor gave you a **much lower grade** on the informative speech than you expected. As a result, it is now **more likely** that you will **lose** your scholarship.

Your instructor seems very relaxed, looks at the class when teaching, and walks around the room during lectures. Moreover, this instructor engages in a lot of eye contact while speaking and is generally perceived by your fellow classmates as friendly and approachable.

Conference with your Instructor

Imagine that you've made an appointment with this instructor to discuss your speech grade.

How would this situation make you feel?

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each item and then write the appropriate value in the space provided to the left of each statement to indicate how you would feel about having a conference with this instructor. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer that seems to describe your feelings best. (1=Not at all; 2=Somewhat; 3=Moderately so; 4=Very much so).

1. _____ I felt calm.
2. _____ I felt secure.
3. _____ I was tense.
4. _____ I felt strained.
5. _____ I felt at ease.
6. _____ I felt upset.
7. _____ I worried over possible misfortune.
8. _____ I felt satisfied.
9. _____ I felt frightened.
10. _____ I felt comfortable.
11. _____ I felt self-confident.
12. _____ I felt nervous.
13. _____ I was jittery.
14. _____ I felt indecisive.
15. _____ I was relaxed.
16. _____ I felt content.

17. _____ I was worried.
18. _____ I felt confused.
19. _____ I felt steady.
20. _____ I felt pleasant.

Imagined Interactions with the Teacher

Very often people talk to themselves. Sometimes that talk includes what researchers call “imagined interactions.” This kind of self-talk involves mental conversations with a partner who may not even be physically present. Such mental conversations might occur before an actual conversation. Below are a series of statements about imagined interactions with teachers. Please indicate the extent to which you would do the following before having a conference about your speech grade with the teacher described above. Please use a seven point scale where 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Moderately Disagree; 3 = Slightly Disagree; 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree; 5 = Slightly Agree; 6 = Moderately Agree, and; 7 = Strongly Agree.

- _____ 1. In order to prepare for an important conversation with this particular teacher, I would use imagined interactions to plan what I would say.
- _____ 2. I think I would probably have a number of imagined interactions before I would interact with this particular teacher.
- _____ 3. I would not rehearse what I was going to say to this teacher; instead I would just say what I had to say.
- _____ 4. I would use imagined interactions to practice what I might say in upcoming interactions with a teacher of this type.
- _____ 5. I would not use imagined interactions ahead of time to plan conversations with this particular teacher.
- _____ 6. I would rarely use imagined interactions to prepare for upcoming encounters with this teacher.
- _____ 7. Before actually talking to this teacher, I would imagine my interaction first.
- _____ 8. Before going to class with this teacher, I would mentally rehearse what I would say in class.
- _____ 9. Before I would visit this teacher in her/his office, I would imagine how the conversation would go.
- _____ 10. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to better understand myself.
- _____ 11. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would help to clarify my thoughts and feelings about this teacher.
- _____ 12. I don't think that having imagined interactions with this teacher would help me figure out this teacher any better.
- _____ 13. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would go a long way toward understanding how I should (or should not) communicate with him/her.
- _____ 14. I don't see how imagined interactions would help me understand where this teacher is coming from.

- _____ 15. I do not believe that imagined interactions would help me get a better grasp of how I feel about this teacher.
- _____ 16. Imagined interactions with this particular teacher would help to reduce my uncertainty.
- _____ 17. Imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to better comprehend what I think and how I feel about him/her.
- _____ 18. Imagined interactions would enable me to understand my reactions to actual encounters with this teacher.
- _____ 19. Imagining an interaction with this teacher would help me get things off my chest.
- _____ 20. I would use imagined interactions to deal with stressful situations surrounding this teacher.
- _____ 21. In an effort to relieve tension or anxiety about this teacher, I would rely on imagined interactions.
- _____ 22. Imagined interactions would not help me to relieve tension or discomfort about this teacher.
- _____ 23. Imagined interactions do not help me get rid of unwanted emotions about this teacher.
- _____ 24. I would feel better if I could imagine an interaction where I told the teacher what I really thought about him/her.
- _____ 25. Imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to get over my frustrations about her/him.
- _____ 26. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would not help me feel any better.
- _____ 27. Imagined interactions with this teacher would only make me feel worse, not better.

This Completes the Survey. Thank you for your participation

Scenario 3 (Higher than Expected Grade x Low Teacher Immediacy)

Grading Scenario

Imagine that you are enrolled in a public speaking course. Your goal this academic term is to make high enough grades to avoid losing the financial aid you need for tuition and other expenses. If you lose your scholarship you will probably need to drop out of school or go into great debt to pay for it. As a result, your future plans would be less certain and secure. This will also disappoint your family members who are counting on you to finish your education and get a well-paying job. Consequently, your strategy is to **avoid anything that can go wrong** and might stop you from realizing your responsibility to make high enough grades so that you will keep your scholarship.

You've recently presented a 7 – 10 minute informative speech worth 20% of your final course grade. Your course instructor gave you a **much higher grade** on the informative speech than you expected. As a result, it is now **more likely** that you will **keep** your scholarship.

When giving lectures, your instructor seems very tense, looks at the board or notes while talking, and stands behind the podium without moving around the room. Moreover, this teacher rarely makes eye contact with the class and is generally perceived by your fellow classmates as unfriendly and unapproachable.

Conference with your Instructor

Imagine that you've made an appointment with this instructor to discuss your speech grade.

How would this situation make you feel?

A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each item and then write the appropriate value in the space provided to the left of each statement to indicate how you would feel about having a conference with this instructor. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer that seems to describe your feelings best. (1=**Not at all**; 2=**Somewhat**; 3=**Moderately so**; 4=**Very much so**).

1. _____ I felt calm.
2. _____ I felt secure.
3. _____ I was tense.
4. _____ I felt strained.
5. _____ I felt at ease.
6. _____ I felt upset.
7. _____ I worried over possible misfortune.
8. _____ I felt satisfied.
9. _____ I felt frightened.
10. _____ I felt comfortable.
11. _____ I felt self-confident.
12. _____ I felt nervous.
13. _____ I was jittery.
14. _____ I felt indecisive.
15. _____ I was relaxed.
16. _____ I felt content.

17. _____ I was worried.
18. _____ I felt confused.
19. _____ I felt steady.
20. _____ I felt pleasant.

Imagined Interactions with the Teacher

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- _____ 2. I think I would probably have a number of imagined interactions before I would interact with this particular teacher.
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- _____ 4. I would use imagined interactions to practice what I might say in upcoming interactions with a teacher of this type.
- _____ 5. I would not use imagined interactions ahead of time to plan conversations with this particular teacher.
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- _____ 25. Imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to get over my frustrations about her/him.
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This Completes the Survey. Thank you for your participation

Scenario 4 (Higher than Expected Grade x High Teacher Immediacy)

Grading Scenario

Imagine that you are enrolled in a public speaking course. Your goal this academic term is to make high enough grades to avoid losing the financial aid you need for tuition and other expenses. If you lose your scholarship you will probably need to drop out of school or go into great debt to pay for it. As a result, your future plans would be less certain and secure. This will also disappoint your family members who are counting on you to finish your education and get a well-paying job. Consequently, your strategy is to **avoid anything that can go wrong** and might stop you from realizing your responsibility to make high enough grades so that you will keep your scholarship.

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8. _____ I felt satisfied.
9. _____ I felt frightened.
10. _____ I felt comfortable.
11. _____ I felt self-confident.
12. _____ I felt nervous.
13. _____ I was jittery.
14. _____ I felt indecisive.
15. _____ I was relaxed.
16. _____ I felt content.

17. _____ I was worried.
18. _____ I felt confused.
19. _____ I felt steady.
20. _____ I felt pleasant.

Imagined Interactions with the Teacher

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- _____ 1. In order to prepare for an important conversation with this particular teacher, I would use imagined interactions to plan what I would say.
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- _____ 3. I would not rehearse what I was going to say to this teacher; instead I would just say what I had to say.
- _____ 4. I would use imagined interactions to practice what I might say in upcoming interactions with a teacher of this type.
- _____ 5. I would not use imagined interactions ahead of time to plan conversations with this particular teacher.
- _____ 6. I would rarely use imagined interactions to prepare for upcoming encounters with this teacher.
- _____ 7. Before actually talking to this teacher, I would imagine my interaction first.
- _____ 8. Before going to class with this teacher, I would mentally rehearse what I would say in class.
- _____ 9. Before I would visit this teacher in her/his office, I would imagine how the conversation would go.
- _____ 10. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to better understand myself.
- _____ 11. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would help to clarify my thoughts and feelings about this teacher.
- _____ 12. I don’t think that having imagined interactions with this teacher would help me figure out this teacher any better.
- _____ 13. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would go a long way toward understanding how I should (or should not) communicate with him/her.
- _____ 14. I don’t see how imagined interactions would help me understand where this teacher is coming from.

- _____ 15. I do not believe that imagined interactions would help me get a better grasp of how I feel about this teacher.
- _____ 16. Imagined interactions with this particular teacher would help to reduce my uncertainty.
- _____ 17. Imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to better comprehend what I think and how I feel about him/her.
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- _____ 19. Imagining an interaction with this teacher would help me get things off my chest.
- _____ 20. I would use imagined interactions to deal with stressful situations surrounding this teacher.
- _____ 21. In an effort to relieve tension or anxiety about this teacher, I would rely on imagined interactions.
- _____ 22. Imagined interactions would not help me to relieve tension or discomfort about this teacher.
- _____ 23. Imagined interactions do not help me get rid of unwanted emotions about this teacher.
- _____ 24. I would feel better if I could imagine an interaction where I told the teacher what I really thought about him/her.
- _____ 25. Imagined interactions with this teacher would help me to get over my frustrations about her/him.
- _____ 26. Having imagined interactions with this teacher would not help me feel any better.
- _____ 27. Imagined interactions with this teacher would only make me feel worse, not better.

This Completes the Survey. Thank you for your participation

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VITA

Katherine Elizabeth Armstrong (Katie) was born in Denver, Colorado on November 9, 1994. She is the daughter of Hugh and Jean Armstrong. She graduated from St. Mary's Academy in Englewood, Colorado in 2013. After leaving St. Mary's, she received a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO in 2017. Katie enrolled in the graduate program in Communication Studies at Texas Christian University in the fall of 2018. While working toward her masters' degree, she was a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the Department of Communication Studies, where she taught the basic oral communication course. She was also conducted research with faculty in the department. Katie became a member of the National Communication Association in 2019.

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ABSTRACT

A PILOT STUDY OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AS A PREDICTOR OF IMAGINED INSTRUCTIONAL INTERACTIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE STUDENTS

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The current study explored the relationship between anticipatory anxiety and imagined interaction usage in second language, or L2 students. L2 students experience increased anxiety in the classroom, as they are not used to communicating in their second language. Increased anxiety can contribute to negative classroom outcomes, including lack of participation and poor performance. Grade discrepancy and teacher immediacy can both contribute to communication apprehension when communicating with L2 instructors. Imagine interactions are a cognitive tool that allows individuals to mentally practice communication encounters before they actually happen as a means to reduce apprehension. Using teacher immediacy and grade discrepancy, the study will aim to explore the relationship between anticipatory state anxiety, regulatory fit, teacher immediacy, as well as the role of regulatory fit in imagined interaction usage in L2 students as they pertain to interpersonal encounters with their L1 instructors.