

# IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION UPON SIMULATED SALES PRESENTATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

Using a sample of 212 personal selling students, the effects of communication apprehension upon interaction involvement, a communication competence variable and sales presentation grades were assessed.

**Interaction Involvement** : Cegala (1981) defines interaction involvement as, "...the extent to which an individual partakes in a social environment" (p. 112). Cegala (1981) developed a likert-type scale consisting of three dimensions, and higher scores indicate greater levels of involvement in conversations. Attentiveness (**Attent**) measures the amount of effort expended in carrying on a conversation; perceptiveness (**Percep**) relates to one's ability to understand meaning within the conversation; responsiveness (**Resp**) indicates one's certainty of what has been expressed and making an appropriate response.

**Communication Apprehension (CA)**: Communication apprehension is defined as, "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey 1984, p. 14) and this study is limited to the exploration of traitlike communication apprehension because its level of anxiety is more persistent and less transitory than other types. Traitlike communication apprehension is defined as, "a relatively enduring personality type orientation toward a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts," (McCroskey 1984, p. 16).

**Grade**: Grades from videotaped, simulated sales presentations were used as a measure of communication performance.

TABLE 1. VARIABLE CORRELATIONS

	CA	Attent	Percep	Resp	Grade
CA					
Attent	-.23*				
Percep	-.30*	.60**			
Resp	-.54**	.65**	.67**		
Grade	-.45**	.25*	.24*	.28*	

\* significant at  $p < .05$

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$   $n = 212$  students

TABLE 2. ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE BY LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

Variable Means by Level of CA

Level	CA	Attent	Percep	Resp	Grade
High	83.28	21.59	24.28	37.20	45.32
Moder	59.13	24.20	26.32	42.48	49.34
Low	38.63	26.00	27.85	45.45	50.27

Variable Mean Differences by Level of CA

Level	Attent	Percep	Resp	Grade
Low - High	4.41*	3.57*	8.24*	4.96*
Moder-High	2.61*	2.04*	5.28*	4.03*
Low-Moder	1.80	1.53	2.96*	0.93

\* significant at  $p < .05$

CA Categorical Levels:

high > 72      moder 48-71      low 47 or below  
 $n = 50$              $n = 120$              $n = 42$

Obviously, communication apprehension has harmful effects upon interaction involvement and communication performance, and the negative effect is most dramatic within the high anxiety group. Students, possessing high levels of communication apprehension, are significantly less involved in conversations: they are less attentive to conversational partners; less perceptive of messages transmitted; and less responsive to conversational initiatives and less likely to provide suitable responses. However, as group mean differences suggest, even a moderate level of communication apprehension can lower involvement by reducing responsiveness. Overall, moderate to high levels of anxiety diminish conversational flexibility. In particular, high anxiety lessens general communication effectiveness as evidenced by lower sales presentation grades.