

ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY OF CHINESE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS: A PERSPECTIVE BASED ON STUDENTS' PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the difference in English-speaking anxiety levels with different personality types among middle school students, employing a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The participants comprised third-grade middle school students in Jinjiang District, Chengdu, China, with a sample size of 370 students. Two instrumental tests, namely the personality type test and the English-speaking anxiety level test, were conducted for data analysis. The E-scale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) was used to determine students' personality types, while the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire assessed their anxiety levels. The results revealed a significant difference in the level of English-speaking anxiety between introverted and extroverted students, $F(4,365) = 5.363, p < .05$. The English-speaking anxiety of introverted students is lower than that of extroverted students. Based on the characteristics of students' personalities, it is recommended that educators adopt instructional approaches such as promoting cooperative learning, providing moderate error correction, offering moderate attention to students, and enhancing guidance on learning strategies to mitigate speaking anxiety in students. However, it is crucial to note that the study's scope is confined to middle schools in Jinjiang District, limiting its applicability to students in other regions of China.

Keywords: Personality Type, Speaking Anxiety, FLCAS

INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in spoken English holds a pivotal role in language

acquisition, particularly for the cultivation of multilingual communication skills-an aspect imperative for both English educators and learners (Liu, 2021). The global reality that English is often not the mother tongue poses a substantial challenge for students acquiring English as a second language, navigating the complexities of grammar and vocabulary tests with varying degrees of sophistication. This challenge is particularly pronounced among those encountering the language for the first time.

English functions as a foreign language for Chinese students and is also their second language. The Chinese Ministry of Education mandates a ten-year English curriculum for students, spanning from the third grade of primary school to the third grade of high school. Proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening is expected (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2001). Despite these requirements, many Chinese students encounter difficulties in enhancing their English speaking skills. Existing research consistently highlights that Chinese students commonly grapple with English speaking anxiety (Chen, 2020; Guo, 2021; Cao, 2022). Experiencing anxiety while learning a foreign or second language is referred to as second or foreign language anxiety, manifesting in psychological symptoms such as fear, hesitation, nervousness, and tension, with connections to the autonomic nervous system (Husain et al., 2020).

There are many interactive factors that affect the performance of second language learners during the learning process, including instructional, situational and individual factors. Individual factors are various, such as personality, age, natural ability, and cognitive style (Dai, 2021). This study explores the relationship between personality type and speaking anxiety in second language learning.

Personality can be conceptualized as an individual character formed by a constellation of personal traits (Song, 2020). Individual personality, in turn, exerts influence on choices, preferences, and thoughts, leaving a lasting imprint during the process of language acquisition (Alagić, 2022). Numerous psychologists have delineated various types of personality traits. Initially, according to Jung (1913), there are two personality types, namely introversion and extroversion. These two types of individuals think in different ways and have distinct perspectives on various aspects

of life (Khalil, 2016). Subsequently, Norman (1963) introduces five relatively orthogonal personality factors, with extroversion being the first factor, emphasizing individuals' level of engagement in social interactions. Following this, Eysenck (1967) presents his three super trait models, including extroversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism, highlighting differences in emotional reactions and social behaviors among individuals. Ellis (1994) further categorizes personality traits into extroversion/introversion, adventurousness, tolerance of ambiguity, empathy and inhibition, examining individual behaviors and emotional expressions from multiple perspectives.

On another note, Dornyei and Ryan (2015) proposes the "Big Five" personality model, encompassing neuroticism, extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness, providing a comprehensive framework for personality research. The Big Five is considered a comprehensive personality trait model (Vural, 2019). These diverse personality models offer various perspectives in exploring individual differences in social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Each model emphasizes specific personality dimensions, offering valuable insights into understanding individual differences and behavioral patterns. In this study, our focus will be on introversion and extroversion personality traits, aiming to investigate their relationship with English oral anxiety.

However, middle school students exhibit diverse personality types, and a majority experience anxiety when speaking. Research indicates that, for scholars investigating second language acquisition, the most distinctive and compelling personality trait is considered to be extroversion/introversion (Dornyei, 2005). Extroversion and introversion represent the most extensively studied personality characteristics (Alagić, 2022). Jung (1913) classifies individual personalities into introverted and extroverted types based on psychological tendencies, introducing the theory of personality types. According to this theory, individuals with introverted personalities seldom open up, are hesitant to confide their implicit emotions to others, and engage in meticulous contemplation of external stimuli. Conversely, individuals with extroverted personalities exhibit psychological activities that lean towards external modes of thinking, maintaining an unbounded interest in the dynamic development of external stimuli. They are characterized by an active and positive

temperament, engage in less introspection, and require external assistance or various activities to regulate their own emotions.

Research on the extroversion/introversion and second language speaking anxiety has yielded varied outcomes. In the study led by Husain et al., (2020), English speaking anxiety shows no statistically significant difference between students with introverted and extroverted personality types. Conversely, the investigation conducted by Ma (2020) reveals notable distinctions in the levels of English classroom speaking anxiety based on personality. Among students with introverted personalities, the highest level of English speaking anxiety is observed, followed by those with intermediate personalities, and the lowest level is found among students with extroverted personalities. Al Noor and Khan (2019) assert that extroverted individuals exhibit superior short-term memory, are less affected by stress, and thus, are more inclined to use a second language. In other words, extroverted individuals may experience lower pressure and reduced anxiety when speaking a second language. Aniq (2021) further substantiates the claims put forth by Ma (2020) from an alternative standpoint. In the context of English communication classes, he posits that introverted students typically opt for seats positioned somewhat distant from the teacher's line of sight. This choice is driven by their aversion to being singled out for impromptu contributions, which tends to induce feelings of nervousness, anxiety, and discomfort. This contrasts with extroverted students who exhibit heightened enthusiasm when called upon by the teacher to step forward.

Despite research demonstrating a link between second language proficiency and extroversion/introversion, further investigation into the difference between these personality traits and second language speaking anxiety is warranted. The purpose of this study is to explore differences in English-speaking anxiety based on students' personality types. This research seeks to make a scientific contribution to understanding the personality tendencies and assessment methods related to students' English-speaking anxiety.

The objective of this paper is to identify the differences in speaking anxiety levels among middle school students with different personalities in Jinjiang District, Chengdu City, China. Ultimately, the study seeks to investigate, from a personality perspective, effective strategies for

addressing the issue of speaking anxiety during the English learning process.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed questionnaires to facilitate independent completion by students, encompassing the E-Scale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Both questionnaires were structured with closed-ended questions, ensuring high standardization for effective data collection and statistical analysis. Administered in the respondents' native language, Chinese, the study maintained participant anonymity, with only gender and age as disclosed identifiers. Face-to-face interviews facilitated data collection, and SPSS 25.0 was utilized for data processing and analysis, employing descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA.

The initial questionnaire, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz et al., (1986), comprised 33 items, each scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating elevated anxiety levels. The scale, translated into Chinese by Wang (2003) for middle school students with limited English proficiency, was adapted to the Chinese context by replacing "language" and "foreign language" with "English." Consistency in results across studies by Guo & Wu (2008) validated the Chinese version's suitability for assessing various English speaking anxiety variables among middle school students (Guo & Wu, 2008; Liu, 2021; Guo, 2021). Md Nor (2013) suggests that data from the pilot study can be utilized to assess the reliability and quality of the data collected. The reliability test result for the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was 0.961.

The second component, the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), renowned in fields like medicine, education, and psychology, underwent revision by Chinese scholars Chen (1983) and Gong (1984) to create the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire for Chinese adults and children. Given the average age of middle school students, the EPQ Children's Scale was employed. The EPQ consists of 88 questions and consists of four dimensions: E scale (Extroversion-introversion), P scale (psychoticism), N scale (neuroticism), and L scale (Lie, Validity Scale), with "yes" and "no" options for each question. The E scale was used in this experiment. Raw scores were computed from students' responses,

and the final T-value was calculated using the formula $T=50+10(X-M)/SD$, where X represents the raw score, M is the mean score of the population sample, and SD is the standard deviation of the population sample (Peng, 1989). T-values falling within 43.3-56.7 indicate the intermediate type, where introversion and extroversion are not distinct; 38.5-43.3 and 56.7-61.5 represent tendency types, with 38.5 or below denoting typical introversion and 61.5 and above indicative of typical extroversion (Zhuang, 2020). The reliability test for the E scale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire yielded a result of 0.965.

Participants

This study involved 370 third-grade students from six middle schools in Jinjiang District, enrolled in the English language program for the academic year 2022/2023. By physically visiting the educational contortions of various schools in the Jinjiang District, the author ascertained the number of third-grade students in each middle school, totaling 9,800 third-grade students. To determine the sample size, the author utilized the acceptable sample size formula proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), ultimately determining a sample size of 370.

Volunteers were recruited using a stratified sampling technique. The sample size for each school was determined using the proportional stratified random sampling formula $n_h = (N_h/N)*n$ (Chang & Wen, 1994), where n_h represents the sample size for proportional stratified random sampling. N_h denotes the total population of the stratum, in this study, the student population in each school, namely 900 for School 1, 1300 for School 2, 1200 for School 3, 1200 for School 4, 1200 for School 5, and 4000 for School 6. N represents the total population, which, in this study, refers to the total number of third-grade students in Jinjiang District, amounting to 9800, and n denotes the sample size of 370. The numbers of sample sizes from each school were: School 1=34, School 2=49, School 3=45, School 4=45, School 5=45, School 6=152. Before engaging in the research, all participants obtained informed consent.

Table 1 presents the demographic details of the participants, with 190 (51.4%) identified as female and 180 (48.6%) as male. Regarding age distribution, 97 participants were 14 years old (26.2%), 189 were 15 years old (51.1%), and 84 respondents (22.7%) were 16 years old.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Information

Item	Option	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	180	48.6%
	Female	190	51.4%
Age	14	97	26.2%
	15	189	51.1%
	16	84	22.7%

RESULTS

In this study, the initial step involved categorizing the 370 participants based on personality factors. The T-scores of the 21 questions in the E-Scale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire were tabulated, leading to the classification of personality types into five categories: Typical Type 1 for typical introversion, Tendency Type 1 for introvert tendency, Intermediate Type for intermediate, Typical Type 2 for typical extroversion, and Tendency Type 2 for extroverted tendency (Table 2).

Table 2: Description of Different Personality Types

Type	N	M	SD	
Typical type 1	Introverts	44	93.7955	20.58288
Tendency type 1	Introverts tendency	59	104.5593	18.44962
Intermediate	Intermediate	184	105.1033	19.37339
Tendency type 2	Extroverted tendency	28	102.6786	18.76572
Typical type 2	Extroverts	55	111.4545	18.04502

To assess potential variations in English-speaking anxiety among middle school students with distinct personality types, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was executed, as illustrated in Table 3. This analysis aimed to compare the scores of personality type across the 33 questions of the English Classroom Anxiety Scale. The findings indicated a significant difference in English-speaking anxiety among the 370 subjects on the E (Extroversion/introversion) personality type: $F(4,365) = 5.363, p < .05$.

Table 3: ANOVA Analysis

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between groups	7860.328	4	1965.082	5.363	.000

Within the group	133736.483	365	366.401
total	141596.811	369	

p < .05

Following the LSD post-hoc test, notable distinctions emerged. Significant differences were identified between introversion and extroversion (Mean difference = -17.65909, p < .05), introverts and introverted tendency (Mean difference = -10.76387, p < .05), introverts and intermediate (Mean difference = -11.30781, p < .05). Moreover, a significant difference was observed between extroverts with intermediate and extroverted tendency types (Mean difference = -6.35128, -8.77597; p < .05).

Table 4: Post-Hoc Mean Comparison Results

Boneferroni Mean Comparison	The Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	P
Introverts - Introverted tendency	-10.76387	3.81281	.005
Introverts – Intermediate	-11.30781	3.21226	.000
Introverts - Extroverted tendency	-8.88312	4.62743	.056
Introverts – Extroverts	-17.65909	3.87158	.000
Introverted tendency – Intermediate	-.54394	2.86383	.849
Introverted tendency - Extroverted tendency	1.88075	4.39272	.669
Introverted tendency – Extroverts	-6.89522	3.58776	.055
Intermediate - Extroverted tendency	2.42469	3.88292	.533
Intermediate –Extroverts	-6.35128	2.94162	.031
Extroverted tendency – Extroverts	-8.77597	4.44383	.049

DISCUSSION

Concerning the personality traits of Extroversion/Introversion (E), this study's findings underscore a noteworthy distinction between introverted and extroverted personality types regarding students' English-speaking anxiety (p<.05). In contrast, Tian et al., (2015) investigation into Chinese students arrived at a conflicting conclusion, suggesting an insignificant correlation between anxiety levels and introverted and extroverted personality types among middle school students. This divergence in results may originate from variances in the geographical locations and sample compositions of the respective surveys.

Zhang and Xu (2018) observed significant grade-level differences in the personality traits of middle school students. Notably, this study's sample comprised middle school students in Chengdu, China, while Tian et al., (2015) sample included first and second-year students in Shandong, China. The disparities in both geographical regions and grade levels across the surveys could contribute to the disparate outcomes. These variations in the personality traits of middle school students, contingent on grade level, offer valuable insights into the ongoing development and refinement of adolescents' personalities.

Through a comparison of means, it becomes evident that the mean scores for students with introverted and introverted tendency personality traits ($M=93.79, 104.55$) were lower than those for students with extroverted and extroverted tendency personality types ($M=111.45, 102.10$). This suggests that individuals displaying introverted personality traits generally experience lower levels of English-speaking anxiety compared to their extroverted counterparts. As a result, extroverted students are more susceptible to English-speaking anxiety in classroom environments. This finding is consistent with Sun (2022) research, supporting the notion that, overall, introverted students tend to manifest lower anxiety levels than their extroverted peers.

As per Wang (2022), individuals with high levels of extroversion tend to engage more actively in social activities, displaying greater communication and impulsivity. On the contrary, introverts often exhibit a quieter demeanour, a propensity for social avoidance, and emotional stability. Drawing from these characteristics, highly extroverted students might display an excessively assertive presence in the classroom. Their lack of confidence in their speaking abilities, coupled with concerns about making mistakes, may lead them to adopt an overly proactive approach to learning speaking skills to safeguard their image. Nevertheless, this mindset can also induce a heightened sense of learning-related pressure, including apprehension about negative feedback from teachers, contributing to an increased susceptibility to intense anxiety (Sun, 2022).

Nevertheless, a prevalent trend in research fails to acknowledge that introverted students exhibit lower levels of anxiety when speaking English compared to their extroverted counterparts. Existing studies, as

exemplified by the works of Vural (2019) and Jin (2022), consistently assert that extroverted students tend to demonstrate lower anxiety levels. This perspective is further supported by Dai (2021), whose examination of Chinese students concluded that anxiety levels are lower among extroverted students than their introverted peers. The consensus among researchers aligns with the notion that extroverted students enjoy advantages in English language acquisition. They benefit from increased opportunities for interaction and tend to excel in classroom performance, contributing to a relatively lower level of anxiety (Yu, 2018; Zhang, 2019; Song, 2020).

Certainly, further research is warranted to validate the findings presented in this paper. To optimize outcomes, it is imperative for educators to implement strategies tailored to diminish students' speaking anxiety levels in alignment with their personalities.

Based on the aforementioned findings, it is evident that English speaking anxiety in English classrooms is prevalent among middle school students, with varying levels observed across students with distinct personalities. Recognizing anxiety as a pivotal emotional factor influencing the efficacy of English learning, it becomes imperative for educators to deploy targeted strategies in order to mitigate anxiety levels during students' learning processes and optimize teaching outcomes. The implication as introvert and extrovert as follow:

For introverted personality students, the promotion of cooperative learning is recommended. Given that middle school students are undergoing puberty, their physiological and psychological development may not be synchronized, rendering them susceptible to various psychological challenges (Yang, 2022). Particularly, students with introverted personalities exhibit heightened communication apprehension and experience noticeable anxiety when randomly called upon by teachers to answer questions (Tang, 2022). Therefore, during challenging questions or classroom activities, students could be encouraged to collaborate in groups, facilitating task completion through communication and division of labor. This approach aims to reduce anxiety levels associated with speaking.

Then, a balanced approach to error correction by teachers in the

classroom is advocated. The unique nature of the English subject increases the likelihood of errors occurring in the classroom compared to other subjects (Huang, 2021). Introverted students tend to display heightened sensitivity in interpersonal interactions (Aydın, 2020), making them prone to self-doubt and diminished confidence in English as a result of excessive error correction by teachers. Teachers should be attuned to their students' emotions, exercising judicious error correction in the right measure and at the appropriate times.

As for extroverted personality students, teachers must maintain a balanced focus on students, particularly considering the diverse nature of extroverted students. While extroverted students are often responsive and sociable (Shehni & Khezrab, 2020), an excess of attention may inadvertently contribute to challenges in settling down and a lack of motivation to learn a new language (Alagić, 2022). Excessive attention from a teacher can elevate psychological pressure on the student, potentially inducing anxiety. Therefore, teachers should judiciously allocate attention to students at appropriate times in the classroom, aiming to assist them in reducing undue English speaking anxiety.

Besides, there is a need to enhance guidance on learning strategies. Many students experience anxiety related to exams, and outgoing students may particularly struggle with rule-based aspects, such as grammar and vocabulary, due to a lack of identified learning strategies (Hou, 2012). The mastery of learning strategies plays a beneficial role in alleviating students' English learning anxiety (Chen, 2019). Consequently, teachers should consciously reinforce the guidance on learning strategies for these students during the teaching process, aiding them in discovering suitable learning methods and cultivating their own learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings revealed a correlation between the level of English-speaking anxiety in middle school students and their personality types in Jinjiang District, China. Specifically, introverted students exhibited lower levels of English-speaking anxiety compared to their extroverted counterparts. Consequently, the study offers recommendations to mitigate English speaking anxiety, emphasizing cooperative learning, moderated error correction, balanced attention to students, and intensified guidance on learning strategies. It is important

to note that the study's scope is limited, concentrating solely on middle schools in Jinjiang District, which restricts its generalization to students in other regions of China. English-speaking anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon within the context of English teaching and learning, warranting further exploration by scholars integrating pedagogical and psychological perspectives.

Informed Consent Statement

I am aware that my participation is entirely optional and that I can stop at any moment, for any reason, and without incurring any fees. I am aware that a copy of this consent form will be provided to me.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare the absence of any conflict of interest related to the study.

Ethics Statement

This research adheres to approved ethical guidelines, obtained informed consent from participants, and ensures the protection of privacy and confidentiality in accordance with institutional review board approvals.

Author Contributions

The conceptualization and design of the study, research methodology, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results are contributions made by Tan Ben Dan. Noraini Said provides guidance and oversight throughout the research process, also contributing to the conceptualization and critical review of the manuscript. Nur Suhaidah Sukor contributes constructive input in quantitative data analysis and interpretation.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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