



AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE, SELF-EFFICACY, SPEECH ANXIETY, AND SELF-ESTEEM: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY STUDENTS

(Research Article)

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Abstract

This study examines the multifaceted relationship between personality traits, foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA), and self-efficacy among university language preparatory students, regardless of departmental differences. Building upon past research, this study explores additional dimensions of linguistic anxiety and focuses on the effect of personality traits as explained in the Big Five hypothesis. Data were collected using a quantitative, cross-sectional method from 111 randomly selected university preparatory students enrolled in English language courses. The study explains how these traits influence FLSA and Foreign Language Speaking Self Efficacy (FLSSE) through quantitative evidence and actionable insights to bridge the knowledge gap. The study also looks at the difference between anxiety and self-efficacy levels in explaining possible relationships that might take place within the preparatory classes. Some main findings show that neuroticism is positively associated with FLSA. Anxiety rates are also higher among female students compared with males. Analysis was conducted with SPSS 26. Firstly, reliability was established through Cronbach's alpha analysis. Then, normality assumptions were inspected. To analyze data in order to answer the research questions, independent sample t test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation analysis were carried out. Some main findings show that neuroticism is positively associated with FLSA. Anxiety rates are also higher among female students compared with males. These results enhance knowledge of how personality traits interact with anxiety and congruence of self-efficacy and therefore, they have implications for customized interventions. We strive to contribute meaningfully to such insights that may inform customized interventions and instructional strategies toward addressing the psychological needs of English learners in the preparatory language classes through well-crafted research questions.

Keywords: English language teaching; prep classes; big five; anxiety; speaking; personality; self-efficacy

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1. Introduction

Initiating conversations in a foreign language requires balancing politeness with managing shyness, which often complicates communication. Both shyness and politeness, as tools for conflict avoidance and fostering a friendly atmosphere (Ide, 1989; Leech, 2014; Saeedi & Haghverdi, 2022), play crucial roles in shaping communicative interactions. However, shyness, strongly tied to oral performance, can significantly undermine communication confidence.

This challenge is particularly pronounced in university English preparatory classes, where efforts to achieve communicative competence are hindered by high speaking anxiety, introversion, and self-doubt. The interplay between personality, anxiety, and self-efficacy profoundly shapes learners' experiences with speaking a foreign language. Han et al. (2022) highlights that foreign language speaking anxiety often arises from fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety, which uniquely affect oral performance. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) has been instrumental in assessing these dynamics.

Willingness to communicate, heavily influenced by anxiety and self-perceptions, is a critical factor in language acquisition and use (Alqarni, 2021). Despite the widely acknowledged importance of English-speaking ability for academic and professional success, many students report high levels of FLSA and low levels of foreign language speaking self-efficacy (FLSSE). This disconnect underscores the need to explore how personality traits influence FLSA and FLSSE in preparatory class settings. This study addresses this gap by examining the influence of the Big Five personality traits—Openness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Agreeableness—on anxiety and self-efficacy. These traits are known to significantly impact motivation, confidence, and communicative ability (Erzhanova et al., 2024; Jafari & Shokrpour 2022). By exploring these interconnected factors, the research aims to enhance our understanding of their impact on language learners.

Szyszka et al., (2024) define foreign language anxiety as the heightened state of unease experienced in foreign language contexts, particularly during speaking, which tends to provoke more anxiety than other language skills. Their foundational research explores the cognitive effects of language anxiety and emphasizes its often hidden yet pervasive influence on learning and communication. They also highlight the role of motivation and willingness to communicate as key drivers of successful second language interaction. This underscores the importance of addressing these factors to reduce anxiety and foster active participation.

Sociocultural dimensions of foreign language anxiety have also been explored. For instance, studies from Bosnia-Herzegovina (Hadziosmanovic, 2012) and Indonesia (Erdiana et al., 2020)

provide valuable insights into cultural practices and anxiety. However, both studies lack a detailed investigation into how personality traits relate to FLSA and FLSSE.

The present study builds on this existing scholarship by focusing on university English preparatory classes in Turkey, where students often excel in grammar and written tests but struggle with oral proficiency. While this issue has global relevance, the specific role of personality traits in shaping FLSA and FLSSE remains underexplored in such settings. This study is also based mainly on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) which encompasses personal, environmental, and behavioral factors that operate reciprocally (Bandura, 1986, 1997). An advantage of SCT is that it is particularly useful to examine the interactions between personality traits, anxiety, and self-efficacy in language learning contexts. Self-efficacy is a key component of SCT and is the learners' beliefs about their own capabilities and is related to behavior and anxiety management; the Big Five personality traits provide a structured lens for analyzing intrinsic factors (personal). As a behavioral outcome, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is in line with SCT in that it is shaped by personal attributes and environmental contexts, for instance, classroom settings and social interactions. The study can systematically examine how personality characteristics (personal factor), gender and classroom context (environmental factor), and learners' anxiety response (behavioral factor) interact with one another dynamically using SCT. Therefore, this theoretical approach provides a complete explanation of the psychological mechanisms behind processes of language learning and suggestions for educators who need to create an optimal supportive language learning atmosphere.

Research by Chamani et al., (2023) and Rahman et al., (2023) emphasizes the importance of motivation, emotional regulation, and attentional control in overcoming these challenges. Moreover, Çağatay (2015) highlights the influence of sociocultural norms on anxiety and communicative competence in Turkish university settings. Studies by Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015), Akkuş (2021), Montano et al. (2022), Şenel & Can (2023) and Irfani et al. (2022) further illustrate the significant role of personality traits and cultural factors in shaping anxiety levels.

These findings collectively underscore the necessity of developing tailored strategies to address these psychological and contextual dimensions, particularly within university preparatory classes. Foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) is still one of the major barriers, which can impede the development of language learners' communicative competence and self-confidence, as well as their general linguistic outcomes, especially in the context of language preparatory programs of the universities. Although much research has been conducted on language anxiety, there is little knowledge about how personality traits (conceived through the Big Five personality theory) interact with contextual factors (gender and self-efficacy) to influence students' speaking anxiety. In addition, there is a lack of research regarding gender related disparities of foreign language speaking anxiety in university preparatory contexts. In this gap, it is difficult to create targeted interventions that would effectively neutralize anxiety

and lead to higher levels of self-efficacy. As a consequence, this study systematically investigates the fine-grained interaction between personality trait, gender, and self-efficacy beliefs to guide the design of accommodative pedagogical strategies in a way to enhance learners' communicative competence and self-efficacy in their communicative endeavors.

The general research questions are intended to explain how personality traits, gender, and contextual variables predict one's anxiety about speaking and self-efficacy. This present study particularly tries to find out the answers to the following research questions:

1. How do personality features, as described by the Big Five framework, influence foreign language speaking anxiety and self-efficacy among university preparatory students?
2. Among university language preparatory students, to what extent does gender influence anxiety levels with respect to FLSA?
3. What is the relationship between FLSA and variables: speaking ability, motivation of speaking skills, motivation in group discussions, participation in collective discussions?
4. What are the differences in levels of anxiety and self-efficacy among university preparatory students regardless of language competence, and what is the nature of these differences within and across the preparatory classes?

These questions are meant to probe that interaction between personality, anxiety, and self-efficacy. By responding to these gaps, this present study puts forward some suggestions that may be useful in the design of an intervention sensitive to the needs of learners, with the ultimate aim of enhancing their communicative competence and confidence in a foreign language setting.

2. Method

This section includes specific methodology applied in undertaking the study: descriptions of participants, procedures for sampling, data collection measures, research design, and statistical analysis. It is to assure that the methods applied will guarantee transparency, reproducibility, and clarity.

2.1. Participants

In the present study, a total of 111 students attending the English preparatory class at Necmettin Erbakan University were selected. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 35 years; 77 of the participants fell between the ages of 18 and 21 years. In fact, 54 participants were 19 years old, 27 participants were 18 years old, 17 participants were 20 years old, 8 participants were 21 years old, 1 participant was 23 years old, 1 participant was 28 years old, and 1 participant was 35 years old. Of the participants, 46 were male and 65 females. The only inclusion criterion was being enrolled in the preparatory English classes at said

university. The participants in this study were selected by random sampling from among preparatory class students studying at Necmettin Erbakan University.

2.2. *Data Collection*

Data were collected using two scales and a sociodemographic form detail of which are provided below:

Demographic Details: This obtained information from the participants about their age, gender, and academic background.

Big Five Personality Traits: This scale consisted of the personality characteristics and used a total number of 25 items from Vural (2017), measuring for the five dimensions: Openness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Agreeableness.

In order to establish reliability for the scale Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was conducted. In this respect, items having low item-total correlation coefficient ($<.200$, Boas vd., 2014; Sungur, 2009) were omitted from the scale to ensure reliability. After omitting items with low item-total correlation coefficient, results revealed that Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for openness is $\alpha=.839$, extraversion is $\alpha=.858$, conscientiousness is $\alpha=.787$, neuroticism is $\alpha=.871$ and agreeableness is $.701$.

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: Anxiety when speaking in English was measured in the third section by using the items from Tanrıöver (2012) consisting of 24 items.

The personality and anxiety sections were responded to in a Likert scale format, allowing the articulation of the degree of response or frequency. Items on the questionnaire were not adapted; it was used in its original format.

In order to establish reliability for the scale Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was conducted. In this respect, items having low item-total correlation coefficient ($<.200$, Boas vd., 2014; Sungur, 2009) were omitted from the scale to ensure reliability. After omitting items with low item-total correlation coefficient, results revealed that Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for FLSA is $\alpha=.901$.

2.3. *Research design*

This is a quantitative research method with cross-sectional research design in which data are collected at only one point in time. The participants in this study were observed as one cohort, answering the questionnaire right after class. Descriptive in nature, the research attempted to investigate the relationships among personality traits, foreign language speaking anxiety, and self-efficacy among university preparatory students. No interventions or experimental manipulations were applied, and participants' responses were collected anonymously to support objectivity. Participants were personally contacted after class sessions in Necmettin Erbakan University to participate in the study, and they were given the link of the questionnaire on Google Forms, which they can use on their main devices. They were estimated to complete the

questionnaires in approximately 20 minutes. In this respect, written instructions were included before starting the questionnaire, describing the purpose and nature of the research. Such instructions included the fact that participation is to be performed on a simply voluntary basis, the data is treated in strict confidence, and used only for scientific purposes. There is no need for personal data, and any time they will be able to withdraw without any consequences. At the end of the instructions were highlighted a number of ethical measures to protect from security treatment. In addition, anonymity was guaranteed, and the data remained accessible only to all members of the research team. This enables unbiased and confidential data collection.

2.4. *Data Analysis*

The statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 29.0 software for Windows (IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 29.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp., USA). The normality assumption was tested by looking at the kurtosis and skewness values. If they fall between ± 2 , that variable is assumed to meet normality criteria (George & Mallery, 2010). The table below indicate the normality distribution of the variables.

Table 1. Normality Distribution of FLSA in Groups of Speaking Ability, Motivation, and Classroom Participation

			FLSA_Mean							FLSA_Mean	
			Stat.	Std. Error						Statistic	Std. Error
Eng. Speaking Level	Weak	S	-0.15	0.60	Motivation in Small Group Discussions	Very Little	S	-1.00	0.66		
		K	-0.21	1.15			K	0.21	1.28		
	Below Average	S	0.28	0.36		Little	S	0.39	0.40		
		K	-0.11	0.70			K	1.76	0.79		
	Average Level	S	0.04	0.33		Some	S	-0.08	0.38		
		K	-0.70	0.64			K	-0.53	0.74		
Participation in Whole Class Discussion	Very Little	S	-0.08	0.54	Much	S	0.55	0.45			
		K	0.06	1.04		K	-0.27	0.87			
	Little	S	0.25	0.46	Motivation for Speaking Skills	Weak	S	0.20	0.66		
		K	-0.27	0.90			K	-1.06	1.28		
	Some	S	0.02	0.37		Neither weak nor strong	S	0.21	0.36		
		K	0.05	0.72			K	0.18	0.70		
	Much	S	1.38	0.45		Strong	S	0.11	0.32		
		K	1.85	0.87			K	-0.61	0.63		

S: Skewness, K: Kurtosis

The results depicted in table 1 above indicates that dependent variable (FLSA) has normal distribution in each group of each independent variable.

Table 2. Normality Distribution of FLSA, Agreeableness, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism

	Skewness	Std.Error	Skewness	Std.Error
Agreeableness	-1.52	0.23	1.72	0.46
Openness	-1.19	0.23	1.45	0.46
Conscientiousness	-0.90	0.23	0.35	0.46
Extraversion	-0.53	0.23	-0.37	0.46
Neuroticism	0.30	0.23	-0.78	0.46
FLSA	0.18	0.23	-0.28	0.46

The results depicted in table 2 above indicates that independent variables have normal distribution. Therefore, all of the statistical analysis are to be conducted by using parametric tests.

Descriptive statistics for variables that met the normality assumption were presented as Mean \pm standard deviation. Group comparisons were conducted using independent t-test and one way ANOVA. The relationships between variables were examined using Pearson correlation analysis. and Spearman correlation analysis based on the fulfillment of the normality assumption.

2.5. Ethics

Informed consent was obtained electronically from all participants with ethical approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee of Necmettin Erbakan University (08/12/2023 dated, 2023/572 numbered) and with voluntary participation and confidentiality. Standardized instructions and strict anonymity during data collection helped to minimize research bias. A Cronbach's alpha procedure was used to ensure instrument validity and reliability by removing low correlating items to increase internal consistency. Appropriate statistical procedures were conducted with IBM SPSS 29.0 and normality tests were guided with appropriate analyses to ensure transparency, accuracy, and the rigor, reproducibility, and methodological correctness of the study.

3. Findings

This section presents the results obtained through the statistical analyses conducted to address the research questions formulated in the study. Descriptive statistics, group

comparisons, and correlational analyses were employed to examine the relationships among foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA), personality traits, gender, and self-efficacy.

3.1. Statistics and data analysis

The analysis of demographic and psychological characteristics revealed a diverse group of participants, with ages ranging from 17 to 35 years ($M = 19.36$, $SD = 1.99$). Female participants represented 58.6% of the sample ($n = 65$), while male participants accounted for 41.4% ($n = 46$). The analysis focused on exploring anxiety, personality traits, and related factors influencing language learning.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Items and Subscales

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Agreeableness_1	4.25	1.23	Extraversion	3.44	1.07
Agreeableness_2	3.79	1.18	Neuroticism	2.58	1.09
Agreeableness_3	4.02	1.10	FLSA_1	3.4	1.23
Agreeableness_4	4.15	1.29	FLSA_4	2.63	1.32
Openness_6	3.69	1.08	FLSA_5	2.53	1.41
Openness_7	3.9	1.14	FLSA_6	3.03	1.39
Openness_8	2.92	1.08	FLSA_7	3.1	1.24
Openness_9	3.89	1.12	FLSA_8	3.37	1.44
Openness_10	3.92	1.11	FLSA_9	2.22	1.22
Conscientiousness_11	4.21	1.13	FLSA_10	2.77	1.49
Conscientiousness_12	3.91	1.15	FLSA_11	2.3	1.23
Conscientiousness_13	3.19	1.28	FLSA_12	3.32	1.47
Extraversion_16	3.6	1.30	FLSA_13	2.74	1.33
Extraversion_17	3.57	1.28	FLSA_16	3.52	1.16
Extraversion_18	3.22	1.26	FLSA_17	2.88	1.13
Extraversion_20	3.37	1.21	FLSA_18	2.7	1.44
Neuroticism_21	2.45	1.25	FLSA_19	2.81	1.29
Neuroticism_22	2.71	1.26	FLSA_22	2.45	1.25
Agreeableness	4.05	0.99	FLSA_23	2.02	1.06
Openness	3.66	0.88	FLSA_24	2.73	1.42
Conscientiousness	3.77	1.00	FLSA_Mean	2.81	0.80

When the descriptive statistics of the items in Table 1 are analyzed, the three items with the highest mean scores are Agreeableness_1 ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.23$), Conscientiousness_11 ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.13$) and Agreeableness_4 ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.29$). The three items with the lowest

mean were FLSA_23 (M = 2.02, SD = 1.06), FLSA_9 (M = 2.22, SD = 1.22) and FLSA_11 (M = 2.30, SD = 1.23). These findings indicate that the participants generally scored higher on agreeableness and conscientiousness dimensions and lower on items related to language speaking anxiety.

Gender Differences in Anxiety

Significant gender-based differences in anxiety levels were observed. Female participants reported higher anxiety levels (M = 3.02, SD = 0.76) compared to male participants (M = 2.50, SD = 0.76). Statistical analysis using a t-test confirmed the significance of this difference ($t(109) = 3.50, p < 0.01$). This suggests that female learners may experience heightened anxiety in language learning contexts, potentially due to sociocultural or psychological factors. These findings underscore the importance of gender-specific interventions to address anxiety and foster confidence in language acquisition.

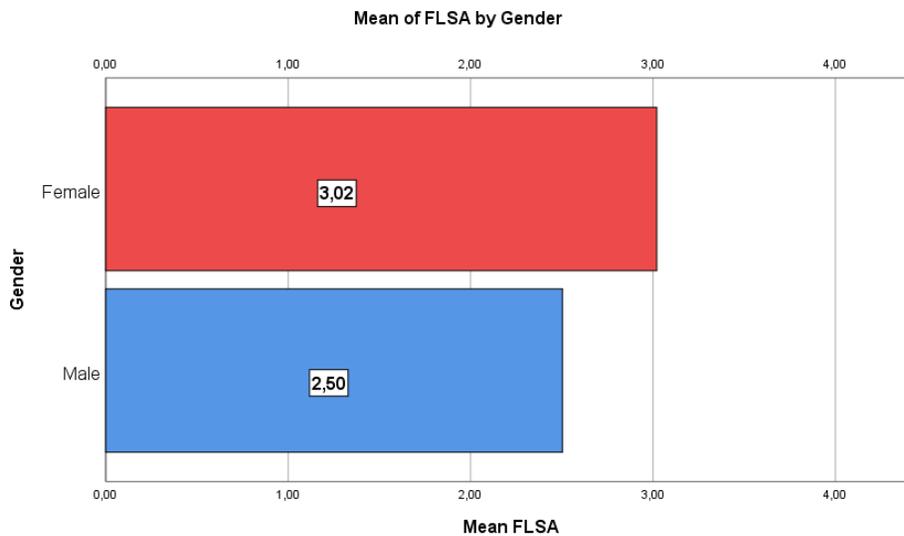


Figure 1. Mean anxiety scores by gender

Relationship Between Anxiety and Key Variables

Table 4 and 5 summarize if there is difference among the groups of key variables, including speaking ability, motivation, and classroom participation in terms of anxiety. These findings

shed light on the intricate relationships between emotional and behavioral factors in language learning.

Table 4. Difference Among Groups of Self-Claimed Speaking Ability and Motivation for Speaking Skills in Terms of Anxiety

	Weak (n=14)		Below Average (n=44)		Average Level (n=53)		<i>F</i> (2, 108)	<i>p</i>	Difference
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Eng. Speaking Level	3.10	0.87	3.03	0.79	2.54	0.73	5.92	0.004	Below Average > Average Level; $p=.008$
	Weak (n=11)		Neither weak nor strong (n=44)		Strong (n=56)		<i>F</i> (2, 108)	<i>p</i>	Difference
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Motivation for Speaking Skills	3.37	0.87	2.86	0.74	2.65	0.79	4.12	0.019	Weak>Strong; $p<.018$

The FLSA was compared among groups based on self-claimed English-speaking ability and motivation for speaking skills using a one-way ANOVA. Differences were revealed between self-rated speaking ability groups, $F(2, 108) = 5.92$, $p = .004$. However, those who perceived their speaking ability to be below average ($M=3.03$, $SD=0.79$) scored significantly higher on anxiety compared to those who perceived their ability to be average ($M=2.54$, $SD=0.73$), $p=0.008$. In addition, there were significant differences between motivation groups, $F(2, 108) = 4.12$, $p = .019$. There was a significant difference between the participants with weak motivation for speaking skills ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.87$) and the participants with strong motivation ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.79$) for speaking skills, $F(1, 22) = 5.60$, $p = .018$. The findings indicate that lower self-perceived speaking competence and weaker motivation to develop speaking skills increase the level of foreign language speaking anxiety.

Table 5. Difference Among Groups of Motivation for Small Group Discussions and Motivation for Participation in Whole Class Discussions in Terms of FLSA

	Very Little (n=11)		Little (n=34)		Some (n=39)		Much (n=27)		<i>F</i> (3, 107)	<i>p</i>	Difference
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Motivation in Small Group Discussions	3.61	1.03	2.96	0.61	2.75	0.71	2.36	0.77	4.12	0.019	Very little > Much. some; p<0.010
	Very Little (n=18)		Little (n=25)		Some (n=41)		Much (n=27)		<i>F</i> (3, 107)	<i>p</i>	Difference
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Participation in Whole Class Discussion	3.33	0.68	2.97	0.83	2.86	0.53	2.22	0.88	9.52	0.00	Much < Very little. little. some; p<0.004

To determine whether there are differences of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) among groups based on motivation, to small group discussion and whole class participation, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Significant differences in the FLSA scores based on motivation levels for small group discussions, $F(3, 107) = 4.12$, $p = .019$ were observed. Participants with very little motivation ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.03$) reported significantly greater anxiety than participants with much ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 0.77$) and some ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.71$) motivations p 's < .010 post hoc.

In the same way, there were significant differences in terms of motivation for participation in whole class discussions, $F(3, 107) = 9.52$, $p < .001$. A significant difference between participants reporting much motivation ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.88$) and those with very little ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.68$), little ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.83$), and some ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.53$) motivation levels was found, $p < .004$, the participants with much motivation reported significantly less anxiety. These results

demonstrate that foreign language speaking anxiety is lower for those who are more motivated for participation in discussion, especially in a whole class context.

Correlations Between Anxiety and Personality Traits

The study also explored the relationship between anxiety and the Big Five personality traits, providing insights into the role of personality in shaping emotional responses. Table 6 presents these correlations, revealing significant patterns.

Table 6. Correlations between anxiety and personality traits

	Anxiety	
	Correlation coefficients	p-Value
Agreeableness	0.161	0.091
Openness	0.121	0.204
Conscientiousness	0.091	0.345
Extraversion	0.064	0.504
Neuroticism	0.418	<0.01

The correlation between measured Big Five framework personality traits and foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) was studied using the Pearson correlation analysis. Result revealed a significant positive correlation between neuroticism and FLSA ($r = .517$, $P < .01$), implying the more neurotic an individual is, the more he does suffer from speaking anxiety. However, correlations between FLSA and other personality dimensions—agreeableness ($r = .161$, $p = .091$), openness ($r = .121$, $p = .204$), conscientiousness ($r = .091$, $p = .345$), and extraversion ($r = .064$, $p = .504$)—were not statistically significant. These findings suggest that neuroticism is an important personality trait related to greater foreign language speaking anxiety.

4. Discussion

This study demonstrated significant relationships between personality traits, foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA), and foreign language self-efficacy (FLSSE) in the context of university preparatory English courses. These findings provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of verbal anxiety in educational settings, emphasizing the importance of considering both individual psychological traits and broader contextual factors.

A statistically significant gender difference was observed in anxiety levels, with female participants reporting higher anxiety scores ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.62$) compared to male participants

($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.62$), $t(109)$, $p < 0.01$. This aligns with previous studies, such as Erdiana et al. (2020), which highlighted moderate levels of speaking anxiety among students. Additionally, findings by Hyesook Park (2006) emphasize that shyness, a trait more frequently reported among female learners, can amplify speaking anxiety and self-doubt, particularly in academic contexts with high performance expectations.

The statistical analysis revealed significant gender differences in speaking anxiety. Female participants consistently reported higher anxiety levels than males, as seen in Erdiana et al. (2020) and Hyesook Park (2006). Park's findings particularly underscore how shyness -a trait more commonly observed among female learners- heightens self-doubt in high-performance academic settings. These results highlight the interplay between gender-specific personality traits and sociocultural expectations, particularly in academic contexts where performance pressure is significant.

Furthermore, these gendered patterns of anxiety suggest that addressing sociocultural norms is essential in mitigating speaking anxiety. Cultural factors, such as the expectations placed on learners to avoid mistakes and maintain politeness, may inadvertently exacerbate fear of negative evaluation, particularly among female students. This highlights the need for gender-sensitive interventions that consider both sociocultural norms and individual psychological traits, ensuring more effective support for language learners.

Additionally, this study found a strong positive correlation between neuroticism and speaking anxiety ($\rho = 0.517$, $p < 0.01$). This supports the findings of Eysenck (1992) and Hadziosmanovic (2012), who emphasized emotional instability's predictive role in language anxiety. This relationship may reflect the high-stakes nature of preparatory programs in Turkey, where students face intense pressure to achieve fluency within limited timeframes. In less intensive learning environments, neuroticism may exert a relatively weaker influence.

Conversely, anxiety negatively correlated with speaking performance ($\rho = -0.229$, $p = 0.015$). This finding reinforces existing literature on the detrimental impact of anxiety on language proficiency. High anxiety levels were also inversely related to motivation for speaking skills ($\rho = -0.224$, $p = 0.018$) and motivation in group discussions ($\rho = -0.293$, $p < 0.001$). These results align with Hashimoto (2002), who highlighted the critical role of motivation in reducing anxiety. The emphasis on accuracy-based instruction in Turkish education systems may further exacerbate performance anxiety compared to fluency-focused approaches in other contexts.

Personality traits also played a significant role in modulating anxiety levels. Conscientiousness showed a significant negative correlation with anxiety ($\rho = -0.222$, $p = 0.019$), suggesting a protective effect. This aligns with Eysenck's theories on emotional regulation and is likely reinforced by Turkish cultural values emphasizing responsibility and hard work. Similarly, extraversion negatively correlated with anxiety ($\rho = -0.198$, $p = 0.038$), indicating that socially outgoing individuals may experience lower anxiety levels. These

findings illustrate how personality interacts with sociocultural and educational contexts to shape language anxiety.

However, neuroticism's strong positive correlation with anxiety ($\rho = 0.517$, $p < 0.01$) and extraversion's negative relationship suggest that personality traits significantly influence students' willingness to engage in English-speaking activities. Students with lower extraversion and higher neuroticism may feel less confident and more vulnerable to fear of negative evaluation, potentially limiting their participation in verbal communication tasks.

These tendencies may also reflect cultural norms in Turkey that prioritize politeness and conflict avoidance, inadvertently fostering fear of making mistakes. While direct data to confirm this assumption is lacking, this dynamic may amplify the emotional sensitivity of students with certain personality profiles. Future research could explore how these cultural factors intersect with individual psychological traits to influence language learning experiences.

The findings also underscore the significance of contextual factors such as group work and classroom participation, which were intentionally included to assess their impact on FLSA and FLSSE. These are particularly relevant in the Turkish educational system, where a predominant focus on written assessments often overlooks oral skills. As noted by Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014), this overemphasis on written assessments at the expense of verbal practice contributes significantly to speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Consequently, students may develop a reluctance to express themselves verbally, further intensifying anxiety.

Addressing these issues requires integrating verbal practice and process-oriented assessments into curricula. Interactive methods, such as group work and participation in discussions, have shown potential in reducing anxiety and fostering motivation. Shifting evaluation criteria from accuracy-based outcomes to fluency-based and process-oriented measures could also alleviate speaking anxiety and promote self-expression.

5. Limitations and Implications

This study had certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it relied solely on self-reported measures, which may be subject to response bias. Second, the sample consisted exclusively of preparatory students in Turkey, limiting the generalizability of findings to other cultural or educational contexts. Future studies could incorporate longitudinal designs and expand the sample to include learners from diverse backgrounds to provide more comprehensive insights.

Despite these limitations, the findings have practical implications for educators and policymakers. By understanding the interplay between personality traits, anxiety, and self-efficacy, tailored interventions can be developed to support students struggling with language

anxiety. For instance, strategies that enhance motivation, promote group activities, and encourage process-based assessments could reduce anxiety and improve learning outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the complex interrelationships among personality traits, foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA), and self-efficacy among university preparatory students within the framework of the Big Five personality theory and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. The findings revealed that neuroticism was positively associated with speaking anxiety, whereas traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness showed protective effects against anxiety. Significant gender differences were also identified, with female students reporting higher levels of speaking anxiety than male students. Additionally, motivational factors related to speaking skills and participation in discussions were shown to influence anxiety levels, underscoring the important role of emotional and behavioral dynamics in language learning. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of how individual psychological factors, such as personality dimensions and self-efficacy beliefs, interact with contextual factors like gender and classroom environment to shape foreign language anxiety. Furthermore, the findings provide empirical support for the application of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory in foreign language learning contexts, highlighting the dynamic interplay between personal attributes, behaviors, and environmental influences.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study emphasizes the need for language instructors and curriculum designers to develop targeted interventions that address not only linguistic competence but also the psychological well-being of learners. Implementing strategies that foster positive self-perceptions, enhance learner motivation, and create supportive classroom climates could significantly mitigate anxiety and promote more effective oral communication skills among students. Gender-sensitive approaches and personality-informed instructional practices may also be particularly beneficial in reducing barriers to language production.

Despite the valuable insights provided, this study has limitations, including reliance on self-reported data and a sample confined to a single institutional context in Türkiye. Future research could expand on these findings by employing longitudinal designs, incorporating observational

methods, and exploring cross-cultural comparisons to further elucidate the mechanisms underlying FLSA and self-efficacy development.

Overall, by addressing both psychological and contextual factors, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of language learning processes and offers practical implications for creating more inclusive and effective language education environments.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics

The authors declare no conflict of interest. Ethical approval received by Necmettin Erbakan University Ethics Committee for Scientific Research in the Social and Human Sciences (08/12/2023-2023/572)



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