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Examining the Relationship between Chinese EFL Learners' Self-Perceived Impression of Oral Presentation Performance and Foreign Language Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language anxiety as an influential determinant of foreign language achievement has long been receiving attention by scholars and educators. However, few studies have investigated how specific components of self-perceived oral presentation performance associate with foreign language anxiety. Additionally, how personality traits would moderate the relationship between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety remains unexplored. This quantitative study aims to investigate the association between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety, and the potential moderating effect of personality traits. A survey was administered to 200 EFL Chinese students, and the data were analyzed using descriptive analyses, correlation analyses, and regression analyses. Descriptive analyses showed a moderate level of anxiety and oral presentation performance reported by students, and female students reported a higher level of anxiety. Furthermore, correlation analyses revealed the negative association between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety. Among the 15 items of oral presentation performance, fluency and confidence displayed the highest negative correlation with foreign language anxiety. More importantly, hierarchical regression analyses confirmed that extraversion and openness

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had negative moderating effects on the correlation between self-rated oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety. This research ends with pedagogical implications regarding greater focus on oral presentation skills, positive reinforcement to students, and attention to individual personality differences.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety; Foreign Language Learning; Oral Presentation; Personality Traits; Self-Perceived Competence

1. Introduction

The study on foreign language anxiety is a well-established field. The research has focused on its effects, sources of foreign language anxiety, specific language skill anxiety, as well as the relationship between foreign language anxiety and other variables such as learner personality, willingness to communicate, perceived competence, self-esteem, and classroom dynamics^[1-4]. Defined as “the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language”^[5], foreign language anxiety is deemed a significant determinant of learning achievement^[4,6,7]. The association between language-specific skills and foreign language anxiety has been widely explored, and it is generally agreed that a higher level of anxiety arises in contexts where speaking occurs^[8,9]. Among different speaking scenarios, delivering an oral presentation in front of the audience is regarded as the most anxiety-inducing factor^[10,11]. Foreign language anxiety stems from various sources, among which a language learner’s self-perception of his or her ability is regarded as one of the most significant aspects^[4,12]. A learner who perceives his or her competence as poorer than that of his or her peers, teachers, or native speakers suffers a higher level of anxiety. Given the significance of oral presentations in academic achievements and employability, there is a need to further explore which aspects of self-rated oral presentations closely correlate with foreign language anxiety, and whether the relationship between the two will be moderated by other variables, such as personality traits. Personality is believed to interfere with language learning and the anxiety arising from foreign language acquisition^[13-16].

A substantial body of scholarship exists on the association between foreign language anxiety and speaking. However, few studies have explored how oral presentation performance, including its subcomponents, interacts with foreign language anxiety. Moreover, the moderating role

of personality traits on this relationship remains under-researched. Therefore, this study investigated how personality differences influence the experience of foreign language anxiety and their self-perceived competence. This study has three aims: 1) to investigate the level of foreign language anxiety and oral presentation performance reported by Chinese EFL learners; 2) to validate the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-perceived oral presentation performance, and which components of oral presentation performance are the most anxiety-provoking; 3) to investigate the moderating effect of personality traits on the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-perceived oral presentation performance. To meet such aims, quantitative data gauging personality traits (via the BFI scale), foreign language anxiety (via the FLCAS), and self-rated oral presentation performance (designed by the author) from 200 EFL learners at the undergraduate level in China were collected. This study aims to shed light on pedagogical strategies for alleviating foreign language anxiety deriving from oral presentation, language learners’ self-evaluation, and individual personality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Foreign Language Anxiety and Language Learning

Foreign language anxiety is defined as “the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning”^[17]. It is a subjective sense of fear, worry, and nervousness that involves physical symptoms like sweating, rapid heartbeat, rapid breathing, or feeling cold^[18,19]. Anxiety can be categorized into three specific forms: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety^[20]. Trait anxiety refers to an individual’s likelihood to become anxious; state anxiety is the emotional reaction of nervousness at a particular moment in time. Anxiety prior

to taking an examination is a typical form of state anxiety. Situation-specific anxiety can be regarded as trait anxiety limited to a given context, e.g., giving a speech in front of the public or taking a math examination. Three performance anxieties related to foreign language anxiety have been proposed: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation^[21]. Communication apprehension refers to the shyness stemming from the anxiety about communicating with people, which is characterized by forms like difficulty in speaking in front of people or listening to a spoken message. Test anxiety is a kind of fear of failure in tests. Fear of negative evaluation refers to an individual's fear or avoidance of others' evaluation. The developments of foreign language anxiety have been categorized into three stages: the confounded approach, the specialized approach, and the dynamic approach^[4]. The confounded approach refers to the early stage of studies on foreign language anxiety when various research into the correlation between foreign language anxiety and language achievements reported inconsistent results. The second phase started with the advent of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). As foreign language anxiety was conceptualized as situation-specific, a growing body of studies sprang up examining specific language skills anxiety. Afterward, research into foreign language anxiety burgeoned from a dynamic approach by unveiling how foreign language anxiety interacted with variables like physiological reaction and interpersonal relationships.

Exploring foreign language anxiety in specific language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—is one of the focuses of the studies. Of the four components of language performance, speaking is believed to be the most anxiety-provoking aspect in a foreign language situation^[8,9]. While speaking anxiety arises in general speaking situations, speaking in public is the most mentioned concern and worry for anxious language learners^[6,22,23]. Anxiety deduced by public speaking is a subtype of communication anxiety in the specific situation throughout the process when an individual speaks in front of the audience^[24]. Oral presentation is a subtype of public speaking. Given its significance for employability and upward mobility, oral presentation is an essential component of students' academic achievement^[23,25]. Similarly, studies indicated that EFL learners experienced a higher level of anxiety

when giving oral presentations in English in front of the audience. For example, one study reported that more than fifty percent of its participants regarded delivering oral presentations in front of the class as the most anxiety-provoking activity^[10]. Another study examined the level of anxiety in English classes of 547 first-year undergraduate non-English majors through surveys, observation, reflective journals, and interviews, and found that students at each proficiency level experienced anxiety when giving presentations in front of the whole class, characterized by a shaking mouth or legs, etc.^[26]. Further research analyzing the communication habits of 275 English for academic purposes students found that giving an oral presentation in front of the class was rated the highest in terms of anxiety sources among different speaking scenarios^[19]. Interviews with EFL teachers and students in Turkey found that anxiety presented as visible discomfort, hesitation, avoidance of eye contact, and even a complete cessation of communication^[27]. This study underscores the profound impact of speaking anxiety not only on the individual student but also on the overall classroom atmosphere and lesson progression. Other research has investigated how trait emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between foreign language anxiety and foreign language enjoyment^[28]. In a more recent longitudinal study, the dynamic changes of foreign language anxiety and foreign language enjoyment over an academic semester were further examined^[29]. Moreover, the relationship between foreign language anxiety and cognitive factors continues to be a key focus, with a recent meta-analysis confirming a strong negative association between foreign language self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety^[30].

2.2. Foreign Language Anxiety and Self-Perceived Competence

The negative correlation between self-perceived competence and foreign language anxiety is one of the most robust findings in the field. A wealth of research consistently shows that learners who lack confidence in their abilities tend to experience higher levels of anxiety, and that highly anxious language learners may underestimate their abilities while relaxed students may overestimate their abilities^[4,12,31,32]. This relationship holds true across different contexts. For instance, when working with uni-

versity students in the United States, perceived scholastic competence was identified as a key predictor of foreign language anxiety^[32]. Shifting the focus to a Japanese university context, it was empirically confirmed that learners' low self-perceived speaking ability was a primary source of their anxiety^[33]. These findings echo earlier diary studies, which highlighted the role of negative self-comparison with peers in generating anxiety^[22]. This foundational negative relationship continues to be robustly confirmed in recent studies across diverse contexts. For example, a latent profile analysis of Chinese EFL learners demonstrated that high self-efficacy is the defining characteristic of the low-anxiety, high-enjoyment student group, reinforcing its central role in learners' affective experiences^[34]. Similarly, research in a Japanese university context, while focusing on grit and motivation, revealed that self-efficacy plays a crucial mediating role^[28]. The findings indicated that higher self-efficacy was associated not only with lower anxiety but also with greater persistence. This underscores that self-perceived competence is a pivotal construct, operating within a complex web of both negative affective variables like anxiety and positive psychological attributes like grit and enjoyment.

Previous studies enrich our understanding of the interplay between foreign language anxiety and language learning in different contexts. However, a critical gap emerges from a closer examination of these studies: they often treat speaking competence as a monolithic, undifferentiated construct. An oral presentation, as a complex academic task, is comprised of multiple sub-skills, including linguistic accuracy, delivery (body language), and psychological readiness^[23]. To our knowledge, few studies have deconstructed self-perceived oral presentation performance into these specific components to investigate which aspects are the most anxiety-provoking, particularly within the Chinese EFL context. This leaves a significant gap in our understanding, as pedagogical interventions need to be targeted at the most problematic areas.

2.3. The Role of Personality Traits

Empirical studies show that personality traits are closely associated with language learning. The universally accepted model of the Big Five personality traits—namely extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroti-

cism, and openness—was employed to investigate individual disparities and how personal traits influenced language learning, such as learning attitude, academic intelligence, willingness to communicate, and learning strategies^[13–16,35]. Extraverted students are believed to enjoy advantages in contexts where speaking occurs, and they are less likely to encounter problems like lower fluency or impairment of short-term memory^[36].

The relationship between personality and foreign language anxiety has been explored in various contexts, yielding an increasingly clear picture. While some early studies in a Canadian L2 context found mixed results^[37], a broader consensus has since emerged. Extraversion is consistently found to be negatively correlated with foreign language anxiety, while neuroticism is a strong positive predictor. For example, research in an EFL context in Taiwan, China, specifically on public speaking anxiety, and a study in Croatia both confirmed the significant roles of extraversion and neuroticism^[3,18]. In addition, recent scholarship has increasingly recognized that personality traits do not merely exert a direct influence on affective variables but also function as crucial moderators that can alter the relationship between other psychological factors and foreign language anxiety. For example, a recent study revealed that personality traits can significantly moderate the association between students' foreign anxiety levels and creative personality^[38]. However, the vast majority of existing research suffers from a significant limitation: it focuses exclusively on the direct effects of personality on foreign language anxiety. This approach overlooks the more nuanced possibility that personality traits do not just directly cause or reduce anxiety, but may also moderate the relationship between other factors and anxiety. To our knowledge, this potential moderating role of personality in the link between self-perceived performance and foreign language anxiety has not been investigated. This represents a major gap in the literature, preventing a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between stable traits and situational perceptions.

In summary, though studies concerning the correlation between foreign language anxiety and language performance have long been established, few studies exist with regard to the association between foreign language anxiety and self-perceived oral presentation ability, and es-

pecially how each component of oral presentation affects foreign language anxiety, given the fact that oral presentation is gaining prevalence in academic assessment and employability. Meanwhile, despite the growing body of studies concerning the impact of personality traits on language learning and foreign language anxiety, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have been conducted to examine whether personality traits, and which personality traits, would moderate the relationship between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety.

To this end, this study aims to respond to the following questions:

1. What are the levels of foreign language anxiety and oral presentation performance reported by EFL learners in China?
2. What are the correlations between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety?
3. What are the moderating effects of personality traits on the correlation between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety?

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

A total of 200 tertiary-level undergraduates majoring in English in China participated in the questionnaire. The online questionnaire was administered via convenience and snowball sampling in a university in China at the end of the academic year, and 200 students volunteered to participate. The questionnaire was completed on an anonymous basis, and it was made clear that their responses would only be used for research purposes. Among the participants, 170 were females and 30 were males. 56 were first-year students, 112 were second-year students, and 32 were third-year students. All participants had experience in delivering oral presentations as partial fulfillment of their course requirements. The questionnaire consisted of four parts: 1) demographic information, 2) personality traits using BFI, 3) level of foreign language anxiety using FLCAS, and 4) a self-rated oral presentation performance form designed by the author.

3.2. Instruments

BFI: The 44-item Big Five Inventory^[39,40] was commonly used to measure an individual's personality. The instrument exhibits strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.88 for extraversion (outgoing/energetic), 0.79 for agreeableness (friendly/compassionate), 0.82 for conscientiousness (efficient/organized), 0.84 for neuroticism (sensitive/nervous), and 0.81 for openness (inventive/curious)^[39], and showed convergence with other five-factor models of personality traits^[41]. Each trait was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "totally disagree" and 5 represents "totally agree".

FLCAS: The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93)^[21], translated into Chinese by a proficient translator, was employed to gauge the level of EFL learners' foreign language anxiety in language learning. The FLCAS was employed since it is a universally accepted scale to measure anxiety in the foreign language learning context and has a strong focus on oral speaking^[6]. As this study aims to examine students' foreign language anxiety in speaking in the classroom context, several of the items from the original FLCAS were removed, such as those asking about anxiety over tests and concern over language outside the classroom context. Each of the 23 items was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Oral presentation performance form: The self-evaluated oral presentation performance form (See **Appendix A, Table A1**) was designed by the author to gauge participants' self-rated level of oral presentation performance. The form was compiled based on the literature of Liang & Kelsen^[42] and Zhang et al.^[43], as well as discussions with the author's colleagues with rich teaching experience in teaching oral presentations. The 15 items were divided into four sections: linguistic competence (pronunciation, fluency, volume, clarity, accurate use of grammar and accurate use of vocabulary), body language competence (eye contact, facial expression and body movement), psychological competence (enthusiasm and confidence), and other competence (rehearsal, mistake management and audience engagement). Participants were instructed to rate each aspect of their oral presentation performance using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "very poor" and 5 indicates "very good". All students have

learned English for at least 9 years, and the connotation of each item was made clear in the questionnaire. The internal consistency reliability of the form in the current study was high, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.892.

3.3. Procedure and Data Collection

The study was approved by the relevant institutional review board. Data were collected at the end of the academic year using an online questionnaire created on "Wenjuanxing", a widely used survey platform in China. Convenience and snowball sampling methods were employed to recruit participants. The questionnaire link was distributed through course instructors and student WeChat groups.

The first page of the questionnaire served as an informed consent form, outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the anonymity of responses, and the assurance that data would be used for research purposes only. Participants who agreed to proceed were then directed to the main body of the questionnaire, which was structured in four parts: 1) demographic information, 2) the Big Five Inventory (BFI), 3) the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and 4) the self-rated oral presentation performance form. The estimated time for completion was approximately 10–15 minutes. A total of 200 complete and valid responses were collected for analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

All data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). The data analysis process was structured to address the three research questions:

First, to answer RQ1 ("What are the levels of foreign language anxiety and oral presentation performance reported by EFL learners in China?"), descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated for all variables. The internal consistency of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine potential differences in foreign language anxiety and self-rated performance between male and female students.

Second, to answer RQ2 ("What are the correlations between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety?"), correlation analysis was per-

formed to investigate the associations between the overall and sub-component scores of self-perceived oral presentation performance and the FLCAS scores. Subsequently, simple regression analyses were conducted to determine the extent to which each performance component could predict foreign language anxiety.

Third, to answer RQ3 ("What are the moderating effects of personality traits on the correlation between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety?"), a series of three-step hierarchical multiple regression analyses was conducted. For each analysis, self-perceived oral presentation performance (the independent variable) and one of the five personality traits (the moderator) were mean-centered to reduce multicollinearity. In Step 1, self-perceived oral presentation performance was entered as the predictor of foreign language anxiety (the dependent variable). In Step 2, the personality trait was added. In Step 3, the interaction term (performance \times personality) was added.

4. Results

This section presents the results of the data analysis conducted to address the three research questions. It begins with descriptive statistics of the main variables, followed by correlation and regression analyses to explore the relationship between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety, and finally, hierarchical regression analyses to test the moderating effects of personality traits.

4.1. Descriptive Data

To initiate the analysis and provide an overview of the data, descriptive statistics were calculated for all key variables, including self-perceived competence, foreign language anxiety, and the Big Five personality traits. This analysis aimed to summarize the central tendency and variability of the scores within the sample. **Table 2** presents the means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) for each scale. The scale showed a high degree of reliability among items with Cronbach's alpha being 0.96. Participants showed a moderate level of foreign language anxiety as shown by the average score (*M* = 3.095, *SD* = 0.709) and there were large disparities among students' self-report-

ed scores, ranging from 1.13 to 4.826. The *t*-test revealed there were statistically significant discrepancies between the oral presentation performance reported by female students and male students. Female students reported a higher level of foreign language anxiety than male students ($M_{\text{female}} = 3.140$, $M_{\text{male}} = 2.860$, $t = 2.030$, $p < 0.05$). No statistical significance was found among the differences in foreign language anxiety from students in different study years.

To provide a general overview of the participants' foreign language anxiety and self-rated oral performance, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were calculated and presented in **Table 1**. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.892, presenting a high level of reliability among items. Generally speaking, participants rated their oral presentation performance at the moderate level ($M = 3.461$, $SD = 0.546$) on the 15 items. However, they expressed their concerns about the performance in several items among the 15. They perceived that when they are

delivering oral presentations English, they were incompetence (with average scores below the mean of overall oral presentation performance) in audience engagement ($M = 2.990$, $SD = 0.951$), eye contact ($M = 3.130$, $SD = 1.034$), accurate use of vocabulary ($M = 3.150$, $SD = 0.728$), accurate use of grammar ($M = 3.245$, $SD = 0.805$), body movement ($M = 3.280$, $SD = 1.013$), facial expression ($M = 3.315$, $SD = 0.959$), mistake management ($M = 3.340$, $SD = 0.916$) and confidence ($M = 3.400$, $SD = 0.987$). No statistically significant disparities were found among students of different study of year and genders in terms of their self-rated oral presentation performance, except that score of rehearsal reported by female students was higher than that of male students ($M_{\text{female}} = 3.820$, $SD = 3.330$, $M_{\text{male}} = 3.330$, $SD = 2.160$, $t = 2.166$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that female students perceived they prepared better in rehearsal than male students thought what they performed.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviations of target variables.

Items	M	SD
Foreign language anxiety	3.095	0.709
Overall oral presentation performance	3.461	0.546
Pronunciation	3.540	0.861
Fluency	3.435	0.812
Volume	3.985	0.836
Clarity	3.850	0.788
Accurate use of grammar	3.245	0.805
Accurate use of vocabulary	3.150	0.728
Overall verbal performance	3.534	0.564
Eye contact	3.130	1.034
Facial expression	3.315	0.959
Body movement (arms, fingers, legs, torso)	3.280	1.013
Overall body language performance	3.242	0.796
Enthusiasm	3.585	0.979
Confidence	3.400	0.987
Overall psychological performance	3.493	0.921
Time management	3.920	0.859
Rehearsal	3.750	0.939
Mistake management	3.340	0.916
Audience engagement	2.990	0.951
Overall other performance	3.500	0.650

4.2. Correlation and Regression Effect Analyses

To investigate the correlation relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-perceived oral performance, a correlation analysis was conducted, and the re-

sults were presented in **Table 2**. Generally speaking, overall self-rated oral presentation performance was negatively related to foreign language anxiety, indicating that student rating themselves lower in oral presentation performance suffered more foreign language anxiety and vice versa. With regard to the 15 items of oral presentation perfor-

mance, except volume, clarity, time management, rehearsal and mistake management, all items showed negative and significant associations with foreign language anxiety, suggesting students who thought they performed poorly in these aspects were experiencing a higher level of foreign language anxiety. Among all items showing significant correlations with foreign language anxiety, confidence ($r = -0.303$, $p < 0.001$) and fluency ($r = -0.239$, $p < 0.001$) showed stronger correlations with foreign language anxiety.

To measure the contribution of self-rated oral presen-

tation performance made in explaining foreign language anxiety, regression analysis was conducted, and the results are shown in **Table 3**. All four sections of oral presentation performance were significant predictors of foreign language anxiety. Linguistic competence, body language competence, psychological competence and other competence respectively explained 6%, 5%, 6.6% and 2.1% of the variance in foreign language anxiety. And the overall oral presentation performance accounted for 7.2% of the variance in foreign language anxiety.

Table 2. Correlation analyses.

Items	Correlation
Overall oral presentation performance	-0.269***
Pronunciation	-0.227**
Fluency	-0.239***
Volume	-0.113
Clarity	-0.070
Accurate use of grammar	-0.157*
Accurate use of vocabulary	-0.226**
Overall linguistic competence	-0.245***
Eye contact	-0.222**
Facial expression	-0.147*
Body movement (arms, fingers, legs, torso)	-0.159*
Overall body language competence	-0.223**
Enthusiasm	-0.176*
Confidence	-0.303***
Overall psychological competence	-0.256***
Time management	-0.038
Rehearsal	-0.031
Mistake management	-0.122
Audience engagement	-0.210**
Overall other competence	-0.144*

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 3. Regression effect analyses.

Items	Regression		
	<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Overall oral presentation performance	-0.349***	15.472***	0.072
Pronunciation	-0.187**	10.742**	0.051
Fluency	-0.209***	11.972**	0.057
Volume	-0.096	2.562	0.013
Clarity	-0.063	0.967	0.005
Accurate use of grammar	-0.138*	4.99*	0.025
Accurate use of vocabulary	-0.220**	10.655**	0.051
Overall linguistic competence	-0.308***	12.631***	0.060
Eye contact	-0.153**	10.308**	0.049
Facial expression	-0.108*	4.348*	0.021
Body movement (arms, fingers, legs, torso)	-0.111*	5.119*	0.025
Overall body language competence	-0.198**	10.326**	0.050
Enthusiasm	-0.128*	6.353	0.031

Table 3. *Cont.*

Items	Regression		
Confidence	-0.218***	20.058***	0.092
Overall psychological competence	-0.197***	13.919***	0.066
Time management	-0.031	0.281	0.001
Rehearsal	-0.024	0.194	0.001
Mistake management	-0.095	3.004	0.010
Audience engagement	-0.157**	9.153**	0.044
Overall other competence	-0.157*	4.171*	0.021

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

4.3. The Moderating Effect of Personality Traits on the Relationship between Self-Perceived Oral Presentation Performance and Foreign Language Anxiety

To understand the moderating role of extraversion in the relationship between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, where self-rated oral presentation performance was the independent variable, oral presentation performance was the dependent variable, and extraversion was the moderating variable, as shown in model 3 in **Table 4**. The interactive term of self-perceived oral presentation performance and extraversion was added on the basis of Model 2. The result uncovered a negatively significant interactive effect of self-perceived oral presentation performance and extraversion on foreign language

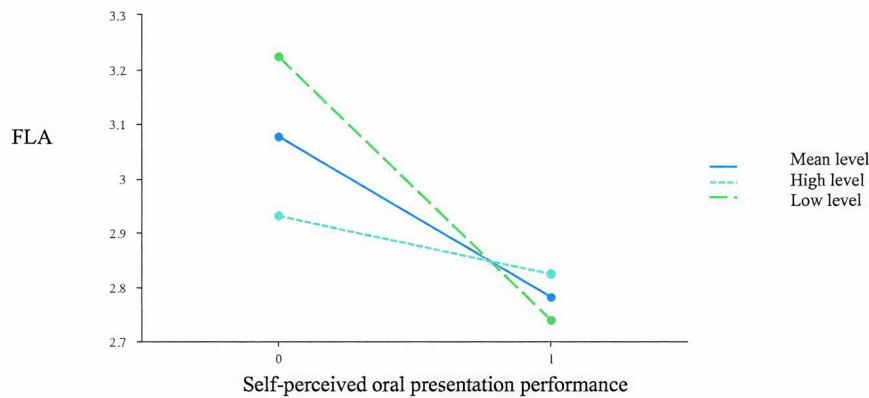
anxiety ($b = 0.242, p < 0.05$), with 13% variation in foreign language anxiety. It indicated the negative correlation between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety was strengthened by extraversion. As seen in **Figure 1**, when extraversion was at a low level, there was a significant and negative correlation between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety ($b = -0.484, p < 0.001$). When extraversion was at the mean level, a similar negatively significant association existed between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety ($b = -0.295, p < 0.01$). However, when extraversion was at a high level, the correlation between the two vanished ($b = -0.107, p = 0.377$). It can be concluded that moderately and lowly extravert students who self-rate their oral presentation performance poorly suffered a higher level of foreign language anxiety.

Table 4. The moderating effect of extraversion on the correlation between self-rated oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety.

	Foreign Language Anxiety ($n = 200$)														
	Model 1					Model 2					Model 3				
	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β
Constant	3.095	0.048	63.959	0.000***	-	3.095	0.048	64.924	0.000***	-	3.076	0.048	64.415	0.000***	-
<i>Independent variable</i>															
Self-perceived Oral presentation performance	-0.349	0.089	-3.933	0.000***	-0.269	-0.306	0.089	-3.434	0.001***	-0.236	-0.295	0.088	-3.356	0.001***	-0.228
Extraversion						-0.166	0.062	-2.649	0.009**	-0.182	-0.188	0.062	-3.010	0.003**	-0.206

Table 4. Cont.

Foreign Language Anxiety ($n = 200$)															
	Model 1					Model 2					Model 3				
	B	SE	t	p	β	B	SE	t	p	β	B	SE	t	p	β
Self-perceived oral presentation performance*extra-version											0.242	0.101	2.410	0.017*	0.162
R^2			0.072					0.104					0.130		
Adjusted R^2			0.068					0.095					0.117		
F value			$F(1,198) = 15.472, p = 0.000$					$F(2,197) = 11.480, p = 0.000$					$F(3,196) = 9.775, p = 0.000$		
ΔR^2			0.072					0.032					0.026		
ΔF value			$F(1,198) = 15.472, p = 0.000$					$F(1,197) = 7.017, p = 0.009$					$F(1,196) = 5.806, p = 0.017$		

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$ **Figure 1.** The moderating effect of extraversion on the correlation between oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety.

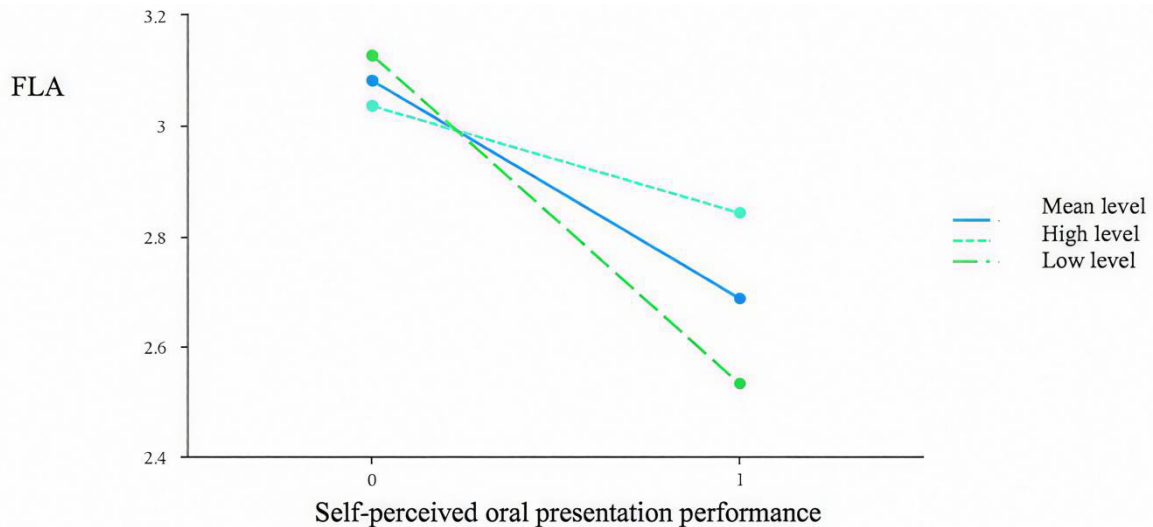
Note: The moderator values are one standard deviation above and below the mean of foreign language anxiety.

A similar hierarchical regression analysis was conducted where openness was the moderating variable to unveil the moderating effect of openness in the relationship between the two examined variables, and the results were shown in **Table 5**. Results revealed that the interactive term oral presentation performance and openness had a positive and significant interactive effect on foreign language anxiety, suggesting openness positively moderated the correlation between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety. As seen in **Figure 2**, when openness was at the mean

level, the negative relationship between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety was strengthened ($b = -0.394, p < 0.001$), and when openness was at the low level, a similar negative and significant correlation between oral presentation and foreign language anxiety can be found ($b = -0.597, p < 0.001$). However, the correlation disappeared when openness was at the high level ($b = -0.194, p = 0.081$). In other words, students who were less open may suffer a higher level of foreign language anxiety if they perceive their oral presentation performance poorly.

Table 5. The moderating effect of openness on the correlation between self-rated oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety.

Foreign Language Anxiety (n = 200)															
	Model 1					Model 2					Model 3				
	B	SE	t	p	β	B	SE	t	p	β	B	SE	t	p	β
Constant	3.095	0.048	63.959	0.000***	-	3.095	0.048	63.842	0.000***	-	3.082	0.048	63.701	0.000***	-
Self-perceived oral presentation performance	-0.349	0.089	-3.933	0.000***	-0.269	-0.343	0.090	-3.829	0.000***	-0.265	-0.395	0.092	-4.312	0.000***	-0.305
Openness						-0.055	0.105	-0.525	0.600	-0.036	-0.099	0.106	-0.936	0.350	-0.065
Self-perceived oral presentation performance*openness											0.434	0.192	2.258	0.025*	0.162
R^2			0.072					0.074					0.097		
Adjusted R^2			0.068					0.064					0.083		
F value	$F(1,198) = 15.472, p = 0.000$					$F(2,197) = 7.846, p = 0.001$					$F(3,196) = 7.038, p = 0.000$				
ΔR^2			0.072					0.001					0.023		
ΔF value	$F(1,198) = 15.472, p = 0.000$					$F(1,197) = 0.275, p = 0.600$					$F(1,196) = 5.097, p = 0.025$				

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$ **Figure 2.** The moderating effect of openness on the correlation between oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety. Note: The moderator values are one standard deviation above and below the mean of foreign language anxiety.

Similar hierarchical regression analyses were conducted using neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness as moderating variables respectively, however, no significant interactive effects were found ($b = -0.059, p = 0.619$; $b = -0.066, p = 0.711$; $b = 0.235, p = 0.233$), indicating neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness did not moderate the correlation between self-perceived

oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety.

5. Discussion

Descriptive data showed that students reported a moderate level of foreign language anxiety. A statistically

significant disparity between foreign language anxiety reported by males and females was found. Female students rated their level of foreign language anxiety higher than that of male students, suggesting that females were more anxious than male students in foreign language learning. This is consistent with previous findings that females demonstrated a higher level of foreign language learning anxiety^[44-46]. However, gender differences in foreign language anxiety still remain inconsistent and require more studies to investigate the effects of external variables such as culture. With regard to self-rated presentation performance, participants reported a moderate level of performance. They thought they performed less well in aspects of audience engagement, eye contact, accurate use of vocabulary, accurate use of grammar, body movement, facial expression, mistake management, and confidence than in other aspects. This suggests that students' anxieties are not just about speaking in general, but are tied to specific, observable performance components that go beyond linguistic accuracy. These interactive skills, central to effective communication, are often underdeveloped and thus become potent sources of anxiety. It is therefore suggested to provide a variety of skill-based training. These areas include the use of vocabulary and grammar, audience engagement, eye contact, and body movement. Students should be made aware of the significance of English oral presentations in employability and academic achievements, and the importance of nonverbal elements involved in English oral presentations, which are not usually underlined in traditional Chinese EFL classrooms. Therefore, the pedagogical suggestions should not only include general anxiety alleviation strategies but also targeted, explicit training on these interactive and nonverbal skills. Meanwhile, foreign language anxiety alleviation strategies could be employed to mitigate its interference in language learning, for example, by constructing a community where students support each other and feel relaxed, providing students with more opportunities for public speaking, and introducing techniques like guided-imagery activities^[33,47].

Before investigating the moderating role of personality traits, the relationship between foreign language anxiety and presentation performance was analyzed. The findings clearly demonstrate a negative correlation between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign

language anxiety, confirming that a student's self-evaluated inadequacy in this area is a significant source of their language anxiety. This echoed previous studies showing that a disbelief in one's ability gives rise to anxiety in language learning^[12,31]. Specifically, this study explored the correlation between the 15 components of oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety. Ten out of the 15 items of the oral presentation performance scale reported by students presented negative and significant associations with foreign language anxiety, except for volume, clarity, time management, rehearsal, and mistake management, suggesting that students who perceived they were incompetent in the aforementioned aspects tend to be more anxious. The highest negative correlations were found between foreign language anxiety and self-perceived performance on fluency as well as confidence. Self-perceived level of pronunciation, accurate use of vocabulary, eye contact, and audience engagement indicated a lower but still significant association with foreign language anxiety. In addition, students' self-perception of performance on enthusiasm, body movement, accurate use of grammar, and facial expression stood as weaker sources of foreign language anxiety. The prominence of confidence and fluency as the strongest correlates is particularly revealing. It suggests that foreign language anxiety in oral presentations may operate as a vicious cycle: internal feelings of inadequacy (low confidence) lead to a perception of disfluent speech, which in turn heightens anxiety and further erodes confidence. This finding provides strong empirical support for a cyclical model where psychological states and performance perceptions mutually reinforce each other to sustain foreign language anxiety.

Given the fact that self-perceived oral presentation performance is a significant predictor of foreign language anxiety, educators should give special attention to those who are less confident about their oral presentation ability and reinforce students' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as one's belief about his or her ability to perform a task successfully^[48]. Self-efficacy stems from a variety of sources, including the difficulty of tasks, constructive feedback highlighting one's performance in a given task, and especially comments from people who are regarded as more knowledgeable or experienced in a specific area^[48]. Therefore, course instructors are suggested to, firstly, formulate tailored

tasks of different difficulty levels or different assessment forms according to students' competence, or start with familiar or less demanding tasks. Furthermore, feedback from course instructors is particularly powerful for enhancing self-efficacy, as students view them as more knowledgeable and skillful. Therefore, teachers are strongly encouraged to provide positive and constructive comments. Positive feedback after presentations is especially needed on the aspects that arouse students' anxiety, such as fluency, confidence, pronunciation, and eye contact. Educators could also modify the assessment scheme so that it does not make students feel competitive, concern themselves with individual differences, and construct a class environment where students encourage and support each other, since self-efficacy also stems from "what people tell them they are able to do". Recent research suggests a strong negative correlation between mental well-being and foreign language anxiety, indicating that students with higher levels of well-being are less anxious^[49]. Another finding is that the correlations between foreign language anxiety and volume, clarity, time management, rehearsal, and mistake management were insignificant. Examining the reasons behind the insignificant associations between foreign language anxiety and the aforementioned items would contribute to expanding the research. Future studies could employ qualitative approaches such as interviews to gain a deeper understanding of why these variables are not sources of foreign language anxiety.

Hierarchical regression analyses were employed to verify the moderating effect of personality traits on the correlation between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety. Extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and agreeableness served as moderating variables, respectively. Among the five personality domains, only extraversion and openness were found to have moderating effects on the relationship between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety. The results confirmed the positive moderating effect of extraversion/openness on the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-perceived oral presentation performance. That is to say, the negative association between self-perceived oral presentation performance and foreign language anxiety was strengthened by extraversion/openness. To be more specific, language learners at moderate and low levels of extraversion and openness

suffer a higher level of anxiety from the self-perception of insufficient ability. This is a profound finding. It suggests that extraversion and openness act as psychological buffers. For highly extraverted individuals, who are naturally more outgoing, or highly open individuals, who may frame challenges as learning opportunities, a perceived poor performance does not automatically translate into debilitating anxiety. Conversely, for introverted and less open students, a perceived failure is not just a performance issue; it becomes a direct threat to their self-concept, triggering a much stronger anxiety reaction. The result did not confirm the moderating effect of conscientiousness, neuroticism, and agreeableness on the relationship between foreign language anxiety and presentation performance. In other words, students' levels of such personality traits do not either strengthen or weaken the negative correlation between self-perceived competence and foreign language anxiety. Previous studies mainly focused on the association between self-perceived competence and foreign language anxiety^[32,33] and between foreign language anxiety and personality traits^[3,50]. The verification of how personality traits moderate the link between self-perceived competence and foreign language anxiety may provide a new research focus: that personality traits may lead to the aggravation of foreign language anxiety arising from self-perceived incompetence. Understanding the role of personality in intervening in the negative association between foreign language anxiety and self-perceived oral presentation performance also has implications for pedagogy. It is important for course instructors to understand the role of personality traits in foreign language learning and pay attention to the learning experience of students of different personalities. They are suggested to understand the profile of students' personality traits through ways like observations, after-class talks, and self-reports, and then employ corresponding teaching methods, strategies, assessment criteria, etc. As evidenced in this study, less outgoing and open students suffer a higher level of anxiety in foreign language learning if they doubt their ability in oral presentation performance. Therefore, course instructors are encouraged to offer emotional support and encouragement to students who are introverted and less open to foster their belief in their ability. This implies a move towards a personality-informed pedagogy. For students identified as more introverted, the primary need is psychological safety. This can be achieved

by providing extensive rehearsal opportunities, allowing presentations in smaller, less intimidating groups first, and framing feedback in a highly constructive, non-judgmental manner.

6. Conclusions

This study explored the association between foreign language anxiety and self-perceived oral presentation performance in undergraduate EFL learners in China, and for the first time, verified the interactive effect of extraversion/openness and self-perceived oral presentation performance on foreign language anxiety. This study makes three primary contributions to the literature on foreign language anxiety. First, by examining self-perceived oral presentation performance, it moves beyond general speaking anxiety to a more specific and pedagogically relevant context. Our findings indicate that while students report moderate anxiety, their self-perceptions of specific skills, particularly fluency and confidence, are significant predictors of this anxiety. Second, and most notably, this research is the first to verify the moderating roles of extraversion and openness in the relationship between self-perceived performance and foreign language anxiety. This reveals that the negative impact of perceived incompetence is exacerbated in learners who are less extraverted or open, highlighting the importance of considering personality in anxiety research. Students at moderate and lower levels of extraversion/openness are prone to experience anxiety arising from self-rated inadequacy in oral presentation performance. Pedagogical implications are provided, including providing skill-based training on oral presentation to improve their presentation competence, providing students with positive reinforcement to foster their self-efficacy, and attaching importance to individual personality differences.

This study, with a focus on the moderating effect of personality traits, filled a gap in the existing research by exploring the interactive effect of two variables on EFL learners' psychological experience. However, this study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, this study employed the quantitative method to uncover the association among the variables and thus failed to gain a better understanding of stakeholders' perceptions. In addition, due to the length of the paper, it failed to find out the reasons behind the insignificant correlations between foreign language anxiety and 5 out of the 15 items of oral presentation performance,

and the disparities in the level of foreign language anxiety as well as oral presentation performance reported by male and female students. Future studies are encouraged to employ qualitative methods, such as in-class observation and in-depth interviews, to gain stakeholders' perceptions of the reasons behind the significant and insignificant associations and strategies to cope with foreign language anxiety. In addition, oral presentation performance rated by participants themselves is inaccurate and subjective, and disparities exist between self-perceived competence and competence rated by external, objective parties. Further studies could expand the current research in this field by exploring the association between students' level of foreign language anxiety and actual oral presentation performance, and whether personality traits would moderate the potential association between language learners' actual competence and foreign language anxiety.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of School of Translation Studies, Xi'an International Studies University. (date of approval: 20 June 2023).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data are not publicly available at this time as they are being used in an ongoing research project.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no competing interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. The 15-item self-rated oral presentation performance form.

Category	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Linguistic competence	Pronunciation	0.892
	Fluency	
	Volume	
	Clarity	
	Accurate use of grammar	
Body language competence	Accurate use of vocabulary	
	Eye contact	
	Facial expression	
	Body movement	
Philological competence	Enthusiasm	
	Confidence	
	Rehearsal	
Other competence	Time management	
	Mistake management	
	Audience engagement	

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