

Exploring the Influence of Neuroticism on Speaking Skills in International Lecture Classes

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Abstract. Neuroticism, as one of the Big Five personality traits, may influence students' speaking ability through its association with speaking anxiety and individual differences in language-learning experiences. This study aims to analyze the comparative speaking skills between students with neurotic and non-neurotic personalities and identify the correlation of the influence of neuroticism on speaking skills in the context of international lecture classes, using a mixed-methods design to explore the personality traits associated with neuroticism, such as anxiety, worry, emotional sensitivity, and stress reactivity, which may influence speaking skills in international classes. Twenty-eight students participated in this study, categorized into two groups based on neuroticism levels, and their speaking test scores were compared with their neuroticism scores. Data collection techniques used in this study were the standard Big Five Inventory (BFI) personality questionnaire, a speaking skills test, and interviews. A total of 28 students completed the questionnaire, and 2 students from the international lecture class participated in the interviews. To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher used inferential analysis, while the qualitative data were analyzed using the analysis technique proposed by Miles et. al, which consists of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. Statistical results showed that neuroticism did not have a significant influence on speaking skills. Moreover, the interview results revealed varying patterns based on perspective and direct emotional experiences. Students with high neuroticism reported lower speaking skills, while students with low neuroticism tended to be more confident in their speaking skills. This condition suggests that speaking skills can be influenced by many factors other than neuroticism. In this case, neuroticism influences emotional experiences during speaking, but it cannot be used as a benchmark for the quality of a person's speaking skills.

Keywords: neuroticism, mixed-methods approach, speaking skills

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are crucial for effective communication, including discussions and debates, as well as for explaining things clearly and in a structured manner (Harianto, 2020). Good speaking skills provide opportunities for success, especially in international interactions (Rao, 2019). In international lecture classes, students from diverse cultural backgrounds are expected to interact fluently in English, thereby supporting effective communication and optimal learning outcomes (Seidlhofer, 2013). However, there are significant differences among students' speaking abilities (Seidlhofer, 2013). Many students experience speech barriers due to anxiety and a lack of confidence, especially in multicultural environments such as international lecture classes that demand rapid verbal expression (Liu & Jackson, 2008). This barrier can lead to decreased academic achievement and social isolation, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of learning. The barriers to speaking experienced by students can originate from their personality, such as anxiety, fear, shyness, and emotional instability, which are relevant to neuroticism. Neuroticism is one of the Big Five Personality dimensions that refers to emotional, anxious, and mood fluctuations, as well as sadness, that significantly affect various aspects of life (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The learning environment must be sensitive to the various challenges faced by students, especially psychological aspects such as low motivation to learn, due to inappropriate or monotonous learning systems or a lack of support, so that learning is in accordance with what is needed (Purnomo et al., 2025). Students who show high levels of neuroticism often experience anxiety in academic environments, especially in situations involving public speaking and interactive learning environments such as international lecture classes (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017).

The relationship between personality and speaking skills has been a subject of considerable research. Of the 5 dimensions of the Big Five Personality, or OCEAN, neuroticism is a personality trait that is positively correlated with and a major predictor of speaking anxiety (Babakhouya, 2019). The personality factor of neuroticism and English-speaking anxiety correlate significantly, indicating that individuals with high levels of neuroticism are more likely to experience speaking anxiety (Hussain et al., 2022). Meanwhile, research on the Influence of Learning Models and Personality Types on Speaking Ability also shows an interaction between personality types and students' speaking ability (Hidayat, 2018). Although neuroticism has been shown to influence speaking skills in several studies, it is not the only factor; therefore, neuroticism can also be negatively correlated with speaking skills. Overall, personality does not significantly influence speaking ability. Students with neurotic personalities demonstrate better speaking skills than those with other personality types (Hidayah et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2023).

There is a negative relationship between neuroticism and public speaking anxiety (Sarira et al., 2023). Other studies have found no significant correlation between personality or learning strategies and speaking ability, indicating that other factors may play a greater role in students' speaking ability (Marpaung & Widyantoro, 2020). There are also no significant differences between introverted and extroverted personalities (Prayitno & Ayu, 2018). Several studies have shown that neuroticism significantly affects speaking skills, but others have shown a negative correlation.

This result demonstrates that environmental factors, population, cultural ties, educational level, and various environmental contexts can influence neuroticism and speaking skills. Many studies have examined the influence of personality on language ability. The studies above demonstrate that the gap lies in the lack of focus on the relationship between neuroticism and speaking skills, and most research focuses on the general population. Several studies have examined the Big Five Inventory (BFI) without solely focusing on neuroticism. While these studies do highlight the relationship between personality and speaking anxiety, they tend to focus on comparing individual characteristics.

Although numerous studies have explored the relationship between neuroticism and speaking anxiety, there remains a lack of understanding of how these personality factors influence speaking ability in the context of multicultural international lecture classes. Studies such as those by Babakhouya (2019) and Vural (2019) emphasize comparisons between specific populations without considering the dynamics of intercultural interactions. Research by Putri et al. (2023) found that students with neurotic personalities demonstrated better speaking skills despite the overall personality factor having no significant effect. This study would re-explore the relationship between neuroticism and speaking ability in the more specific context of international lecture classes and assess how multicultural dynamics may influence this relationship and language learning. This research is expected to provide new insights into how these personality factors influence the dynamics of language learning.

To fill the research gap, the researchers formulate the following research questions: (1) What is the correlation of neurotic personality on students' speaking skills in international classes? (2) How do students with high neuroticism scores compare to those with low scores in terms of speaking skills? Based on these research questions, the study proposes the hypothesis that neuroticism significantly affects students' speaking ability, with students who have higher levels of neuroticism expected to demonstrate different speaking performance from those with lower levels of neuroticism. This study aims to compare speaking skills between students with neurotic and non-neurotic personalities and to identify their influence in the context of international lecture classes. The research offers a more specific approach by focusing on a direct comparison between the two groups of students in the context of international lecture classes. This topic has not been extensively discussed in the existing literature. The study would address gaps in previous research by focusing on international lecture classes, which involve various types of groups and social interactions among more diverse students, as well as other factors that may influence students' speaking skills. Therefore, this study can make an important contribution to a deeper understanding of how neuroticism influences the speaking-learning experience in a global educational environment.

2. METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods research design. This approach was chosen to test hypotheses through the collection of numerical data and statistical analysis, and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research (Bacon-Shone, 2013). This study used a sequential explanatory design to explain and determine the relationship between two variables. This method was used to explain

further whether they affect a person's speaking skills. In this study, there are two main variables. The independent variable is the students' level of neuroticism, measured using a personality questionnaire. The dependent variable is students' speaking skills in the context of international lecture classes, which are evaluated through a speaking test.

This research was conducted at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, within several of its international degree programs. The study lasted approximately 6 months. The object of this study is students' speaking skills in an international classroom context. The research subjects consist of students enrolled in international degree programs at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. Participants comprised 28 international students from various study programs, selected through purposive sampling to include those who scored high (indicating neurotic tendencies) and low (indicating non-neurotic tendencies) on a standard personality questionnaire measuring neuroticism. Purposive sampling was used in this study to ensure that the selected participants possessed relevant characteristics and aligned with the research objectives. This sampling enabled the collection of accurate, valid data for statistical analysis and provided detailed, in-depth information. The research instrument was validated through expert judgment to ensure its validity and suitability for measuring the intended construct.

Data collection techniques used in this study included the standard Big Five Inventory (BFI) personality questionnaire (44 items) to assess participants' neuroticism levels; a speaking test to assess students' speaking skills; and interviews to explore students' experiences and perceptions of their speaking skills. Data collection was conducted online to facilitate participation and maintain confidentiality. The primary data collection tools were a questionnaire and an English-speaking skills test, with interviews as complementary data sources. To measure personality, this study used the Big Five Inventory (BFI) scale developed by John et al. (1991) based on the theory of Costa & McCrae (1985). This questionnaire consists of 44 statements, rated on a 1–5 Likert scale, adapted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI) by John et al. (1991) at the University of California, Berkeley, which measures five dimensions of personality. Respondents provide a score indicating how much they agree with the statement. The questionnaire was retrieved from the Addiction Research Center website at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The website provides a copy of the instrument as a reference for its scoring code. The questionnaire aligns its structure with the original BFI form republished by John et al. (2008), published in the *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research* (3rd ed.), specifically the chapter "A Paradigm Shift to an Integrative Big Five Trait Taxonomy," which is the primary academic source with the full instrument content. For the English test, students took a university-provided speaking test, the English for International Class (EIC), designed to improve students' English language skills comprehensively. Interviews were used to supplement the statistical analysis results to uncover the respondents' firsthand experiences and perspectives. The interviews were conducted by asking a select group of respondents with the highest and lowest levels of neuroticism several questions related to speaking skills.

Data were collected and grouped based on students' neuroticism scores. Descriptive statistics were then used to provide an overview of participant characteristics, such as mean, median, and standard deviation. A normality test was conducted to ensure that the data were normally distributed before proceeding to

inferential analysis. Linear regression analysis was used to test the effect of neuroticism (variable X) on speaking skills (variable Y), and an independent t-test was used to compare the two groups to identify significant differences between students with low and high neuroticism scores. The analysis was conducted using SPSS statistical software. To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher used inferential analysis, while the qualitative data were analyzed using the analysis technique proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification.

3. RESULTS

Based on the study sample, 28 respondents from international lecture classes were divided into two groups: 15 with low neuroticism and 13 with high neuroticism. The results indicate that neuroticism has no significant effect on an individual's speaking skills. Descriptive statistics show that the neuroticism score (X) has a mean of 3.25 with a standard deviation of 0.75, while the speaking score (Y) has a mean of 4.78 with a standard deviation of 1.35. Meanwhile, based on the grouping, students with low levels of neuroticism had a mean of 4.87 (SD = 1.35), and those with high levels had a mean of 4.69 (SD = 1.4). These descriptive statistics indicate that speaking ability varies more widely than neuroticism levels.

Table 1. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.037 ^a	.001	-.037	1.3818

a. Predictors: (Constant), Neuroticism Score

Table 2. Coefficients.

Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	5.004	1.177		4.252	.000
	Neuroticism Score	-.067	.353	-.037	-.190	.851

a. Dependent Variable: Speaking Score

Furthermore, the results of the linear regression test in Table 1 show an R-square value of 0.001. This value indicates that neuroticism only influences speaking skills by 0.1%. Therefore, it can be concluded that neuroticism does not influence speaking skills. Most likely, the influence of speaking skills in international lecture classes can be attributed to motivation to learn, subject mastery, the surrounding environment or habits, and the language of social interaction.

The regression coefficient for the neuroticism variable in Table 2 is -0.067, indicating a negative effect in the opposite direction. However, the significance value is 0.851, which is much greater than 0.05 ($0.851 > 0.05$), so this negative effect cannot be considered statistically significant. Nevertheless, although neuroticism does influence speaking skills, the effect in this study was too weak to be statistically proven.

Table 3. Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Group	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Score	Low	.213	15	.065	.943	15	.415
	High	.186	13	.200*	.919	13	.241

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Next, in Table 3, we can see the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test (which is more appropriate for small sample sizes, i.e., $n < 50$). Significance values of 0.415 and 0.241 were obtained for the low group ($n = 15$) and the high group ($n = 13$), respectively. Similar results were observed in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with significance values of 0.065 for the low group and 0.200 for the high group, respectively. The normality test was conducted to determine whether the data in both groups were normally distributed. This test is important because it serves as a prerequisite (assumption test) for data analysis using parametric statistical tests, in this case, the independent-samples t-test.

Because both significance values for each group were greater than 0.05 (Sig. > 0.05), it can be concluded that the speaking scores in both groups (low and high) were normally distributed. With normally distributed results, the data are suitable for further analysis using parametric statistical tests, namely the independent-samples t-test, to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two groups.

Table 4. Independent Samples Test

Variable	Variance Assumption	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	0.005	0.945	0.333	26	0.741	0.174	-0.900	1.249
	Equal variances not assumed.	—	—	0.333	25.131	0.742	0.174	-0.905	1.254

Next, Table 4 presents the results of the independent t-test, showing that the low neuroticism group ($N=15$) had a mean speaking score of 4.87 ($SD=1.356$), while the high neuroticism group ($N=13$) had a mean speaking score of 4.69 ($SD=1.407$).

The results of Levene's test for homogeneity of variances showed a p-value of 0.945 (>0.05), indicating that the variances of the data in both groups are homogeneous. Therefore, the interpretation of the t-test results is based on the "Equal Variances Assumed" row. Based on the Independent Samples Test table, a t-value of 0.333 was obtained with 26 degrees of freedom (df) and a significance value (Sig., 2-

tailed) of 0.741. Since this significance value is greater than 0.05 ($0.741 > 0.05$), it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in speaking ability between students with low neuroticism and those with high neuroticism. This finding suggests that students' level of neuroticism does not appear to be associated with differences in their speaking ability in this sample.

In the interview results, there were two informants with low and high neuroticism; the results showed a pattern distinct from the statistical results, suggesting that neuroticism may affect a person's speaking skills. First, there was informant A with low neuroticism, stating that "I like chatting with many people and always like talking with friends from different majors, I feel confident" and stated that the difficulty in speaking was in pronunciation: "my difficulty is from pronunciation, I have difficulty pronouncing some words because sometimes when I say it feels strange". Informant B with high neuroticism stated, "I feel my speaking skills are bad, because I always feel embarrassed, nervous, so I don't have confidence" and stated, "if sometimes I chat like that, I have difficulty explaining something I mean, and, in my mind," The statements conveyed by the two informants in this study were based on what they felt and experienced themselves, from each answer of each informant showed that besides other factors, perhaps the level of neuroticism was also able to affect a person's speaking skills.

Based on the statistical results, the study shows that the neuroticism personality trait does not have a significant effect on a person's speaking skills. This is evidenced by a linear regression test with a significance level of $0.851 > 0.005$, meaning the effect was found to be insignificant, and an independent t-test with a significance value greater than 0.05 ($0.741 > 0.05$), indicating no significant difference between students with high and low levels of neuroticism. However, based on interviews conducted with students exhibiting high and low levels of neuroticism, the results varied considerably. Respondent A, who has low neuroticism but also low speaking skills, stated that they have fairly good self-confidence when speaking and indicated that their difficulty stems from pronunciation. Conversely, Respondent B, who has high neuroticism and low speaking-skills scores, tends to lack confidence and feel shy; consequently, when required to use their speaking skills, they feel nervous and are unable to speak well. "Sometimes when I'm chatting like that, I have a hard time explaining what I mean and what's on my mind," said Respondent B. These interview results align with the study conducted by Vural (2019); this finding indicates that students with neuroticism have a significant association with foreign language speaking anxiety, where students experience nervous tension and a poor mood. In the study by Clague and Wong (2023), it was shown that individuals with neuroticism also exhibit a positive relationship with evaluative social beliefs and self-focus; this aligns with the interview results, where neuroticism is linked to self-confidence and shyness.

Although the statistical test results showed no significant relationship or difference between neuroticism and students' speaking skills, and the interview results revealed a new finding, namely, that students with high neuroticism experience greater anxiety when speaking, which impairs their speaking skills, these two sets of results provide different perspectives on the same phenomenon. The statistical results were measured using performance-criterion-based speaking-skills scores, whereas the interviews explored the meanings and experiences respondents had regarding their own speaking skills. These interviews were used to provide an in-

depth understanding of the relationship between neuroticism and speaking skills, based on participants' direct experiences. In other words, students with high neuroticism can still achieve speaking scores that are roughly on par with those of students with low neuroticism, depending on each individual's practice, learning, motivation, and so on. However, students with high neuroticism require a more extensive process due to their anxiety and self-confidence issues.

From the analysis of the interview results above, there are identifiable patterns, such as in the case of respondent B who is included in the high neuroticism group and low speaking score, has a neuroticism score of 4.7 above average (>3.25) and speaking score of 3.0 who feels he is less able to control himself, nervous, shy and not confident when having to speak, so that his ability to convey ideas is hampered. In the case of respondent A, who has a neuroticism score of 2.2, included in the low group (<3.25), but also has a low speaking score of 2.5, where he stated that he is confident. He has difficulty with pronunciation. There were also questionnaire respondents with a neuroticism score of 3.5 (>3.25) but a relatively good speaking score of 7.5. From several sources, there are several patterns of differences in each answer. It can be observed that speaking skills are influenced by many other factors besides neuroticism; in this case, neuroticism influences emotional experiences during speaking, but it cannot be used as a benchmark for the quality of a person's speaking skills. Therefore, this study finds that neuroticism does not significantly affect students' speaking skills.

Research shows that neuroticism accounts for only 0.1% of speaking skills, which are likely influenced by external factors by 99.9%. Some factors that may influence a person's speaking skills include motivation to learn, scheduled practice, vocabulary mastery, and the surrounding environment. As in a previous study by Fahira (2025), there are two factors influencing speaking skills: internal factors, including interest, language skills, concentration, motivation, cooperation, and self-confidence, and external factors, including the learning environment, native language, and sociocultural context. In a study by Astuti and Pusparini (2019), the factors identified were vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar; mastery of topics; anxiety; and self-confidence. In a study by Kafryawan (2019), motivation was found to have a significant influence on students' speaking skills, with students noting that the better the motivation provided by the teacher, the better their speaking skills became. In Nhan's (2024) study, the findings indicate that peer interaction plays a major role in improving speaking skills by helping students practice the language, boost their self-confidence, and create a comfortable learning environment. Peer interactions can foster collaborative learning to improve fluency, accuracy, and mastery of new vocabulary. Guidance is also necessary for students to improve their speaking skills; self-directed efforts such as practice and self-motivation are equally essential, and a supportive environment is crucial for practicing and enhancing speaking skills (Islam et al., 2022). Vocabulary mastery and self-esteem are also positively and significantly associated with improved speaking skills; strong self-esteem can help a person feel more motivated, achieve their goals, and develop their full potential (Dewi & Jimmi, 2018). An appropriate language learning curriculum is also a very important aspect for improving speaking skills; adjusting strategies and implementing appropriate learning methods can help students improve their speaking skills in their speaking classes (Kehing et al., 2021). Based on the above studies, it can be concluded that both internal and external factors can influence speaking skills.

The use of a mixed-methods approach in this study yielded more comprehensive results and a broader scope. Using this method in research can help provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between neuroticism and speaking skills in situations and conditions, as well as a broader perspective. This can help address the shortcomings of previous studies that used only a single method (Taherdoost, 2022). In this study, quantitative data were analyzed using linear regression and an independent t-test, which revealed no significant relationship between neuroticism and students' speaking skills; the findings showed that neuroticism contributed only 0.01% ($r^2 = 0.001$). If this study relied solely on statistical data, its interpretation would be limited to the conclusion that neuroticism had no effect at all on speaking skills, without a broader perspective. The inclusion of interviews (qualitative data) offers a different perspective that deepens the findings, revealing that differences between the two groups persist in their subjective experiences and emotions. Thus, integrating these two types of data yields broader and more balanced conclusions. However, the statistical results were not significant; the respondents' direct experiences add another dimension to this study.

The implications of this study provide a broader understanding of the relationship between neuroticism and speaking skills, namely in international classes in the context of language learning. The findings statistically show that neuroticism does not significantly influence students' speaking skills ($p = 0.741$, $R^2 = 0.001$). Findings from interviews with experiences and personal perspectives show many variations in each informant's patterns, shaped by their direct emotional experiences. This helps enrich the findings on the relationship between neuroticism and students' speaking skills, which may depend on the environmental context and the learning process. Based on the findings in this study, it can broaden the theoretical perspective that speaking skills are not solely influenced by one dimension of personality, but also come from various factors such as sociology, linguistics, psychology, and anthropology that work together. Practically, this study provides teachers with an understanding of how to create a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment and to be sensitive to students' psychological conditions during the learning process. This research can be a means for students to overcome nervousness and increase their self-confidence, better understand themselves, and know what is lacking, what needs to be improved, and what needs to be done. Knowing one's own emotional condition can help improve the learning process, increase motivation and self-confidence, and support appropriate learning to improve speaking skills and other aspects of language learning.

This research can contribute to the field of science and language learning, especially speaking. This research provides empirical evidence on the relationship between neuroticism and students' speaking skills using mixed methods and international lecture classes. Unlike most previous studies that rely solely on quantitative methods, this research combines statistical and interview data to better understand how neuroticism is perceived and affects students individually. This research provides new findings beyond previous studies, bringing emotional nuances to the participants. Using mixed methods, this research provides more complex and realistic findings on the relationship between variables X and Y; these findings can contribute to knowledge in both education and psychology. The study was conducted with a sample of 28 students and found no relationship; therefore, further research

with a wider scope and a larger population is needed to obtain more varied results and explore factors related to neuroticism and speaking skills in greater depth.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that neuroticism does not significantly affect students' speaking ability. The results of the statistical tests ($p=0.741$ and $p=0.851$) indicate that neuroticism does not influence students' speaking quality. Thus, the hypothesis stating that neuroticism affects speaking ability is rejected. However, the interview results revealed varying patterns regarding the relationship between neuroticism and speaking skills. For example, students with high neuroticism and low speaking scores reported feeling nervous, shy, and lacking confidence when speaking. Conversely, students with low neuroticism but also low speaking scores reported higher self-confidence and were able to speak and interact well. These findings suggest that neuroticism is more closely related to the emotional experience of speaking than to the final speaking skill scores. Future researchers are expected to offer a broader scope and a larger population to obtain more diverse results and explore more deeply the factors related to neuroticism and speaking skills, such as the environment, learning motivation, and the learning methods used. In addition, this study helps future researchers pay more attention to designing learning methods and approaches appropriate for student learning. Appropriate classroom learning will help students with high neuroticism improve their confidence and speaking skills.

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