

## Chinese Senior Students Mental Activities in Online Spoken English Class Caused by Covid-19 Transmission in Chinese Society

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**Abstract:** Because of the global growth of COVID-19, many courses are now being taken online. Many spoken English courses' teaching models are also under threat. China is not a native English-speaking nation, and while spoken English programs are naturally participatory, several aspects of internet learning hinder their effectiveness. As students adjust to the online learning process, their learning habits change, their work and relaxation schedules become irregular, and their learning becomes inefficient, all of which can lead to psychological alterations as a result of the shift in teaching method. Some upper-level pupils exhibit symptoms such as anorexia, holiday syndrome, and even pessimism and misanthropy. In this regard, the author employed an online spoken English teaching mode and evaluated the psychological sentiments of different grade students in a public high school regarding their classroom learning this semester using a questionnaire after the class. The survey results revealed that: (a) long periods of staring at a screen can result in emotions such as depression and irritation; (b) the online speaking teaching mode makes students' learning less active and less motivated; (c) students' classroom interaction decreases, which can result in emotions such as worry and anxiety; (d) Students' knowledge perspective is skewed, which can lead to sadness and self-doubt; (v) has an impact on the parent-child connection. As a result, in order for the online classroom to function smoothly and effectively, the development of online education must first attempt to overcome difficulties connected to students' learning psychology.

### 1. Introduction

The new coronavirus outbreak spread quickly over the world in early 2020, and COVID-19 is a huge public health issue that threatens the people's physical and psychological wellbeing (CDC Weekly, C., 2020). According to the Chinese Ministry of Education (Moe.gov.cn, 2021.), elementary and secondary school students across the country will begin studying at home in mid-February 2020, with English-speaking lessons offered online.

Students' and their parents' schoolwork, employment, and lives are all affected by a sudden public health incident. According to research, large public health emergencies can cause acute psychosocial stress in humans, compromising people's physical and mental health (SUN, Q. and SU, Y., 2020). The frequency of mental and behavioral disorders among teenagers has increased since the COVID-19. According to Neece (2020), 85.7 percent of parents observed changes in their children's emotional condition during the school shutdown time, with typical symptoms including inattention, boredom, impatience, irritation, and anxiousness. Zhao, Lulei (2020) studied 396 Chinese school kids aged 8 to 18 years and discovered that 22.0 percent of teenagers suffered from an anxious mood disorder during the epidemic, which was 4.1 percent more than the prevalence of adolescents during COVID-19.

Meanwhile, Tian (2020) discovered that those under the age of 18 were more likely to be at danger, and that there were age inequalities. Hankin (1998) discovered that anxiety and depression levels rose with age, and that teenagers were more likely than children to feel discomfort. Zhou (2020) argued that during the epidemic, older adolescents used social media more frequently than children, leading to an increased likelihood of depression and anxiety in individuals in the upper grades compared to those in the lower grades, as well as a higher likelihood of anxiety about academic development in the upper grades.

Furthermore, because China is not a native English-speaking nation, an effective oral English classroom should be participatory. Imitation reading and reciting of the text should be emphasized by teachers. Text memorization assists pupils in storing vocabulary and idioms in their thoughts as well as developing a rapid flow and understanding of language. Second, they should encourage students to express themselves in English, increase their motivation in studying, and provide every student with the chance and platform to exhibit their speaking talents. Furthermore, a casual linguistic environment and culture should be fostered so that students may express themselves boldly and actively.

The online learning model clearly cannot accomplish the desired impact of English-speaking learning, and some types of group work clearly cannot be realized adequately, and contact between teachers and students cannot be carried out on time, and teachers' expectations cannot be effectively communicated. Outside of the classroom, when the language environment is weak, most kids do not know how to engage in autonomous verbal learning. Speaking lessons become listening classes for certain pupils, particularly those with limited verbal abilities (Yang, Ke., Li, Sha., 2020).

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Object

The entire group sample approach was used to choose pupils for testing from grades 8 to 12 at Xiamen Foreign Language School. The questionnaires were sifted, and some missing data and incorrect questionnaires were eliminated. The total number of valid surveys was 501, with a 91.4 percent successful recovery rate (Table 1).

Table 1 Distribution of Survey Respondents

Grade	8	9	10	11	12	Total	Percentage
Male	59	58	61	42	50	270	53.9
Female	72	37	52	33	37	231	46.1
Total	131	95	113	75	87	501	100
Percentage	26.1	19	22.6	15	17.4	100	

### 2.2 Research Tools

The Mental Health Diagnostic Test (MHT) scale was employed initially, which was amended by Professor Zhou Bucheng of the Department of Psychology, East China Normal University, and was based on the Diagnostic Test of Restless Tendencies created by Kiyoshi Suzuki et al. in Japan (Wen, 2005). The fold-half reliability of the scale varied from 0.85 to 0.88, while the retest reliability ranged from 0.667 to 0.836 (p 0.01). The entire scale had 100 questions and was divided into eight content subscales and one validity scale (i.e., lie detector scale). Learning anxiety, anxiety about others, loneliness tendency, self-blame tendency, allergy tendency, bodily symptoms, terror tendency, and impulsivity tendency were the eight content measures. Each question was followed by two responses, “yes” or “no,” and the individuals were asked to pick based on their actual scenario. Based on the whole scale scores, a total anxiety intensity of 65 is considered a major mental health condition and a psychological illness that necessitates psychological counseling or therapy. Furthermore, respondents who scored 8 on each subscale indicated that they were symptomatic on the item, that they were maybe maladjusted, and that they needed to establish a related guidance program. An open-ended questionnaire was also created to look at the reasons of psychological suffering among middle and high school pupils as a result of online English-speaking lessons.

### 2.3 Research Procedure

To begin, we conducted a literature analysis and conducted interviews with school class teachers to better understand the psychological situations of Xiamen senior students enrolled in online English-speaking lessons. Based on this, a questionnaire was distributed to the related pupils in order to poll them about their psychological activities. The Mental Health Diagnostic Test (MHT)

was completed by students using the group test technique, and the questionnaires were delivered using a combination of online and offline methods. The findings of the surveys were used to assess the mental activity of senior students in English speaking classrooms in Xiamen. The study's findings were utilized to recommend appropriate psychological protection and therapy strategies.

### 3. Data Analysis

(1) An overall investigation of the psychological behaviors of senior students in Xiamen's online English speaking classes while under the effect of COVID-19. According to the statistics, 24 students (4.8 percent) had significant mental health problems (high anxiety level, total scale score 65); 308 students (61.5 percent) had some mental health problems (moderate anxiety level, 35 total scale score 65); and 169 students (33.7 percent) had scores below 35. Six of the 24 people with high anxiety levels were men (2.2 percent of the male population) and 18 were women (7.8 percent of the female population). According to subscales 8, 364 pupils reported symptoms of learning anxiety, accounting for 72.7 percent of the total number of students, indicating that learning anxiety is the most common psychological condition among present secondary school students. The positive detection rate for each subscale was 364 (72.7%) for learning anxiety, 169 (33.7%) for allergic tendencies, 164 (32.7%) for self-blame, 136 (27.1%) for physical symptoms, 60 (12%) for terror tendencies, 57 (11.4%) for anxiety about people, 33 (6.6%) for impulsive tendencies, and 27 (5.4%) for loneliness. The number of seniors who scored at least one of the eight subscales 8 was 405, accounting for 80.8 percent of all students, suggesting that these seniors had at least one or more mental health problems that needed to be addressed.

(2) Gender comparison of online English-speaking class psychological activities of Xiamen secondary school students affected by COVID-19. The statistical findings of male and female pupils' scores on each measure revealed that girls outperformed boys on all aspects. Except for learning anxiety ( $P = 0.107 > 0.05$ ), where the differences were extremely significant in six dimensions: anxiety about people, blaming tendency, allergy tendency, physical symptoms, terror tendency, and impulsivity tendency ( $P 0.001$ ), and loneliness tendency dimension ( $P = 0.012 > 0.05$ ). According to these findings, there is a statistically significant difference in mental health levels between male and female pupils. Male and female students' mental health levels differ, and female students' mental health problems are more severe than male students' (Table 2).

Table 2 Comparison of Differences between Genders in Mental Health Outcomes (m±Sd)

Gender	Male(n=270)	Female(n=231)	t value .	P value
Learning Anxiety	8.87±3.040	9.31 ±3.054	-1.616.	0.107
Anxiety about	4.04±2.326	4.89±2.395	-3.989	0
people.	2.68±2.148	3.19±2.441	-2.522	0.012
Loneliness tendency	5.66±2.534	6.40±2.614	-3.223	0.001
Self-blame tendency	5.93±2.221	6.58±2.209	- 3.295.	0.001
Allergic tendencies	5.01±3.017	6.13±3.248	-3.996	0
Physical	2.92±2.627	4.27±2.988	- 5.344	0
symptoms	2.73±2.353	3.80±2.678	-4.699	0
Terrorist tendencies	37837±14.422	44.576±15.548	- 5.029	0
Impulsive tendency	Male(n=270)	Female(n=231)	t value .	P value

(3) Inter-grade comparison of mental activity in senior students' online English-speaking classes in Xiamen while under the impact of COVID-19. Under the effect of the COVID-19, there were statistically significant disparities between grades in senior students' mental health testing findings in Xiamen (Table 3). The analysis of grade differences in total anxiety intensity in the mental health measure results revealed that the differences between five different grades were statistically significant ( $F=5.825, p0.005$ ) for all other dimension scores that achieved significance levels, indicating that the differences between grades for these dimensions were statistically significant.

Table 3 Comparison of Differences between Grades in Mental Health of Secondary School Students in Xiamen under the Influence of Covid-19 (m±Sd)

Items	Number of people	Learning Anxiety	Anxiety about people	Loneliness tendency	Self-blame tendency	Allergic tendencies	Physical symptoms	Terrorist tendencies	Impulsive tendency	Total score
Grade 8	131	9.23±3.02	4.22±2.39	2.71±2.03	6.00±2.74	6.02±2.33	5.36±3.34	3.45±2.96	3.18±2.73	40.18±15.77
Grade 9	95	8.95±2.66	4.78±2.26	3.54±2.48	6.48±2.27	6.61±1.91	6.47±3.00	4.03±2.90	4.21±2.50	45.07±13.45
Grade 10	113	9.05±3.14	4.52±2.65	3.15±2.58	5.90±2.73	6.31±2.34	5.78±3.23	3.10±2.84	3.41±2.58	41.22±16.49
Grade 11	75	8.15±3.41	3.67±2.39	2.17±2.10	4.93±2.51	5.44±2.6	4.23±2.86	3.60±2.88	2.20±2.16	34.39±14.95
Grade 12	87	9.80±2.90	4.92±2.01	2.89±2.08	6.51±2.35	6.69±1.78	5.56±2.91	3.68±2.73	2.84±2.28	42.89±13.47
Total	501	9.07±3.05	4.43±2.39	2.92±2.30	6.00±2.60	6.23±2.34	5.53±3.17	3.54±2.88	3.22±2.56	40.94±15.31
F value		3.158	3.692	4.361	5.017	4.375	5.75	1.457	7.538	5.825
P value		0.014	0.006	0.002	0.001	0.002	0	0.214	0	0.005

(4) An examination of the causes of psychological activity among senior students in Xiamen who were subjected to the COVID-19. The retrieved open-ended questionnaires were sorted, and the results are displayed in the table below. According to the chart below, the psychological sentiments of secondary school pupils attending oral online lessons may be categorized into five categories. Among these, the share of students' feelings such as concern and anxiety owing to decreased classroom engagement is higher, accounting for 35%. (Table 4).

Table 4 Summary of Open-Ended Question Responses in the Questionnaire (497 Responses out of 501 Questionnaires)

Problems	percentage
long hours of staring at the screen makes students depressed and irritable	15%
the online oral teaching mode decreases students' learning initiative	20%
students' classroom interaction becomes less and generates anxiety	35%
the learning effect does not receive timely feedback, making students depressed and self-doubt	15%
it affects parent – child relationship	10%
others	5%

#### 4. Discussion

(1) According to the study data, the overall detection rate of senior students in Xiamen who displayed significant psychological issues in online English-speaking classes while under the impact of COVID-19 was 4.8 percent. The total detection rate of psychological issues among them was 61.5 percent, with learning anxiety having the highest detection rate. This suggests that senior students in Xiamen under the effect of COVID-19 continue to experience more severe psychological issues with the online English-speaking class. Although the percentage of persons with more significant psychological disorders was low, 80.8 percent of respondents had at least one element of anxiety symptoms. As a result of COVID-19, students are unable to study at school for a lengthy amount of time and are compelled to take online classes at home while staring at a screen for an extended period of time. Children with inadequate self-control or without parents have a negative impact on their academic achievement and enhance their anxiety symptoms. This, on the other hand, is tied to China's existing examination system. Despite China's advocacy for excellent education, test-based education continues to dominate. The local education department uses student performance as the major criterion to evaluate the school's operation, and the school evaluates instructors based on student performance in class. Teachers will offer a lot of homework in this circumstance in order to boost pupils' performance. Overloading pupils with homework puts more pressure on them to learn. They are also concerned about being chastised by instructors and parents for their poor performance, which heightens their learning anxiety.

(2) Both male and female students have more learning anxiety discomfort in online English-speaking classes, followed by bodily symptoms and allergic propensity issues. This is a frequent psychological issue that affects both males and girls. In terms of gender comparison, the statistical findings of male and female students' scores on each dimension reveal that girls outperform boys on all dimensions. Girls are more impulsive than boys, and the earlier pubertal development and psychological maturity of females compared to boys may be a major factor for the gender difference. Furthermore, females are more receptive to negative information than boys, and the aftereffects of such unpleasant feelings frequently stay longer in girls than in boys. Then, as a result of the psychological panic and threat to life caused by COVID-19, females are subjected to

higher and more permanent negative effects and stress, which may be the primary reason why girls experience more severe anxiety disorders at this specific era. In response to the diverse mental health features of male and female students, customized mental health education and mental health information for the characteristics of students of different genders should be supplied.

(3) There were substantial grade disparities in the findings of mental health measures taken by senior students in Xiamen while under the impact of COVID-19. In terms of school level, students in lower grades were more concerned about online English-speaking lessons than students in higher grades. There is a distinct tendency of “younger” psychological issues. Possible explanations include that Grade 8 and 9 children are nearing or reaching adolescence. They are young, have low cognitive abilities and are highly reactive to rapid outbursts of stress. In addition, the poor self-regulation ability and the high expectations of teachers and parents for academic performance may also cause tremendous psychological pressure on students.

## **5. Recommendation**

In this study, we present positive remedies and solutions from three perspectives: school, family, and students themselves, to solve the aforementioned issues of senior students' mental health in Xiamen for online English-speaking classes under the effect of the pandemic.

### **5.1 Schools**

According to this survey, the biggest problem with senior students' mental health is studying anxiety, which raises concerns about school instruction. Schools and instructors should prioritize students' physical and emotional health while also caring about their academic achievement. To begin, the quality of education should be matched with a suitable curriculum for elementary and secondary school students. Oral lessons should not last more than one hour. Schools should place a premium on developing initiative and drive in their students. Students should not be permitted to gaze at the screen for an extended period of time unless there is a break in the course. Second, make an effort to finish classroom learning assignments. In the classroom, schools should emphasize student engagement. Allowing children to rest and experience life by giving appropriate amounts of work and weakening academic exams allows them to rest and experience life. Third, provide psychological counseling programs and establish mental health counseling rooms. Regular mental health education seminars should be held in schools, and classroom instructors should learn about psychology in order to give more positive messages. This will aid in identifying and resolving the psychological difficulties of older students. Fourth, schools should promote collaborative relationships with families and instruct families on how to improve their children's scientific and practical response to the pandemic. According to positive psychology, social support boosts physical and mental immunity and lowers the chance of sickness. This, in turn, leads to a better sense of well-being.

### **5.2 Family**

According to family function theory, family schooling has a distinguishing feature. That is, family education has a significant impact in a person's development. Positive parent-child communication, according to relevant psychological studies, makes it easier for youngsters to accept their parents' viewpoints. It protects youngsters from acquiring unwanted behaviors by internalizing the standards and expectations of their parents. Zhao (2008) discovered that true closeness and adaptability in senior students were substantially and adversely connected with learning anxiety, loneliness inclinations, physical symptoms, and impulsive tendencies. This shows that a lack of familial connectedness and maladjustment are important variables in senior students' mental health. Students may experience unpleasant feelings if learning outcomes do not receive timely feedback or do not satisfy the expectations of their parents. Parents should be aware that a good personality and a healthy physique serve as the foundation for their children's future academics and employment. Instead of focusing solely on the child's education, parents should provide more suitable care for their children as they get older. Parents should not only be concerned

with the learning effect during this time period, but should also actively collaborate with instructors to create a better learning environment for spoken English while addressing their children's practical requirements. Only families and schools can collaborate to give authoritative information to senior students, which should be slanted toward positive information regarding outbreak prevention and control efforts. Share strategies to increase elders' outbreak protection to help them establish a positive and healthy protective mentality. When elders have bad emotions that they are unable to control on their own, parents should provide a good example. Confessions and exercise can help parents lead their children in expressing their underlying concerns and fears. Students should also take the initiative to seek professional treatment from their school psychologist or a psychological support organization if they are experiencing psychological challenges that cannot be handled.

### **5.3 Students**

To begin, students should pay great attention to their physical and mental health and speak with their parents and instructors when problems occur. While children are learning to be self-aware of their damaging emotions, they should also be learning to express and channel their emotions in acceptable ways. Listening to soft music before night, for example, can assist to alleviate anxiety. Students can also unwind through sports, entertainment, strolling, and other hobbies. Second, pupils should improve their goodwill. Explore and activate good feelings in the mind to oppose and conquer bad emotions by managing the incidence and strength of emotions.

## **6. Conclusion**

Online English speaking lessons have become the norm as a result of COVID-19's influence. However, the issues brought forth by online spoken English programs, such as reduced classroom interaction, have increased students' learning anxieties and concerns. The author used a questionnaire survey and data analysis to conduct a study on online English instruction for senior students in Xiamen. The data suggested that senior students' online English speaking lessons in Xiamen were plagued by psychological issues. It suggests that COVID-19 influences senior students' online spoken English learning. Students' extended eye contact with the computer, poor self-control, and a lack of supervisors during online lessons at home all had an impact on their performance and psychological discomfort in certain processes. We approach this issue from two perspectives: in terms of gender, females outperform boys on all psychological parameters and exhibit more acute anxiety. Females' earlier psychological maturity is a major contributor to the gender gap. Anxiety was also evident across grades in terms of grade distribution. Lower grades were more likely to experience anxiety than better grades. Excessive stress is caused by psychological immaturity and variations in cognitive levels. As a result, research into how to successfully combine education and students' psychological formation has additional theoretical and practical significance. This necessitates the collaboration of instructors and parents, as well as the self-regulation of pupils in their maturation process. The psychological reactions of senior students taking oral online lessons may be classified into five categories: (a) looking at the screen for a long time, it is easy to produce emotions such as depression and irritation; (b) the online speaking teaching mode makes students' learning less active and less motivated; (c) students' classroom interaction becomes less, which is easy to produce emotions such as worry and anxiety; (d) students' knowledge perception is biased, which is easy to produce depression and self-doubt; (v) affect the parent-child relationship. The largest share of students' worries and anxiety is due to less interaction in the classroom

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