Foreign Language Anxiety and Perspectives of College Students of Japanese in the United States: An Exploratory Study

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Foreign language anxiety is a crucial factor affecting foreign language (FL) learning and performance. However, little research has been conducted in foreign language anxiety involving students of Japanese. In addition, the majority of previous studies approached this issue with quantitative analysis, resulting in a lack of in-depth, qualitative analysis of the role of foreign language anxiety. To fill these gaps, this exploratory study employed semi-structured interviews as the main date collection method and investigated students' anxiety experiences in a college introductory-Japanese course in the United States.

The present study indicates that American college students of Japanese have test and speech anxiety. In particular, college students of Japanese fear making mistakes in front of teachers and peers and also the subsequent negative evaluation of those mistakes. As for test anxiety, while some researchers claim this is not specific to FL learning situations, the present study implies that test anxiety may result from unfamiliar test formats and tasks.

Additionally, Aemricans sutdying Japanese expect their teachers to be helpful and friendly, in order to reduce their foreign language anxiety. Moreover, three factors were anxiety-reducing: teachers' helpful attitudes, good relationships with classmates, and a well-structured program.

These results are congruent with those of previous studies, suggesting that teachers play an important role in reducing students' foreign language anxiety. Based on these results, I suggest several strategies to reduce foreign language anxiety in Japanese classes: 1) showing willingness to help students learn Japanese, 2) being supportive rather than

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authoritarian especially in error correction, 3) giving students opportunities to interact with peers in pair and small group activities, 4) providing students with a well-organized syllabus that guides them to success in learning Japanese, and 5) correlating test format and content to materials covered in class sessions.

INTRODUCTION

Almost every student sometimes feels nervous when she/he studies a foreign language (FL). As FL teachers, we often see anxious students and how they tend to underperform compared to confident students. In other words, anxiety seems to be a crucial factor in FL learning. Since the role of foreign language anxiety was recognized, this issue has been well researched. Scholars of FL education have investigated the specific construct of foreign language anxiety (Aida 1994; Horwitz et al. 1986) and the effects of foreign language anxiety on FL learning (Aida 1994; MacIntyre and Gardner 1989, 1991; Saito and Samimy 1996; Samimy and Tabuse 1992; Young 1986) in an attempt to understand FL learning processes. Other studies have examined students' perspectives on foreign language anxiety. Young (1990) conducted survey research with high school and college students of Spanish, while Price (1991) interviewed college students of French. These studies shed some light on the role of anxiety in FL learning and gave useful suggestions for reduding anxiety in FL classrooms.

However, qualitative studies on foreign language anxiety, especially those using interviews, are still scarce. In particular, I found no qualitative research in less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) like Japanese. Samimy (1994) asserts that when native English speakers learn LCTLs or noncognate languages, the differences in writing systems and grammatical structures may produce a higher level of anxiety than for commonly taught languages (CTLs) like Spanish and French. Therefore, to obtain a better picture of students' subjective experiences of foreign language anxiety, qualitative studies employing interviews in LCTLs contexts are needed.

Taking into account these issues, this study attempts to conduct a study similar to Price's (1991) study of French students with students of Japanese. I will first present the overview of previous studies on foreign language anxiety, and then outline the present study's exploration of students' responses about foreign language anxiety in their college Japanese classrooms. Interviews with two students resulted in the profiles presented here. These profiles combined with a review of findings provide implications for classroom practice. It is hoped that this investigation will provide useful information on college students' opinions and needs regarding foreign language anxiety that teachers of FL can apply to teaching practice.

Studies on Foreign Language Anxiety

1 The Concept of Foreign Language Anxiety

In the past few decades, anxiety, a state of apprehension, a vague, sometimes undefined, fear (Scovel 1978), has been noted as an important factor in FL learning (Young 1991). In early research, some studies suggested that anxiety negatively affected language learning and performance, whereas others could find no such relationship (Aida 1994; Young 1990).

Starting in the mid-80's, Horwitz and her colleagues took the lead in foreign language anxiety research. Horwitz et al. (1986) first attributed these early inconclusive results to the lack of an adequate instrument to quantify foreign language anxiety. Then, based on performance anxiety theories and clinical experience with FL students at the University of Texas, they identified three components of foreign language anxiety and developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure levels of nervousness that leaners feel in a FL classroom. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language anxiety consisits of 1) communication apprehension, 2) test anxiety, and 3) fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension refers to nervousness associated with communicating with people. Test anxiety is defined as "a type of performance anxiety stemming from fear of failure" (Horwitz et al. 1986: 217). The last element of foreign language anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, relates to anxiety observed when an individual expects that others would evaluate him/her negatively.

Whereas Horwitz and her colleagues consider test anxiety a part of foreign language anxiety, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991) claim that test anxiety is not specific to a FL learning context but can be oberved in other evaluative situations like math or science classes. Aida (1994) also supports this claim, suggesting that we reexamine the specific construct of foreign language anxiety.

2 The Effect of Foreign Language Anxiety

The attempts to construct the notion of language anxiety have helped reveal the role of anxiety in FL learning. Additional reasearch has indicated a strong negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and students' FL performance (Aida, 1994; MacIntyre and Gardner 1989, 1991; Young 1986). In a study involving college students of French, German, and Spanish, Young (1986) found that their levels of anxiety had negative correlation with their levels on the OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) developed by the ACTFL (American Council on Teaching of Foreign Language). Aida (1994) also discovered that college students of Japanese who were more anxious received significantly lower final grades than less anxious students. Other research suggests that foreign language anxiety negatively correlates with risk-taking, one of the important affective variables in FL learning (Saito and Samimy 1996; Samimy and Tabuse 1992). In their study of

beginning Japanese students in an American college, Samimy and Tabuse (1992) found that the less anxious students were in their classes, the more they were willing to take risks in speaking Japanese. This result suggests that less anxious students are less likely to be afraid of using Japanese in speaking activities, thus improving their proficiency in speaking compared to more anxious students.

In a related study, Saito and Samimy (1996) studied foreign language anxiety across three instructional levels of Japanese at an American university. They found that foreign language anxiety played a crucial role at all three levels. This contradicts MacIntyre and Gardner's (1989) study of French students in Canada, whose anxiety decreased at higher instructional levels. Saito and Samimy suggest that the tendency for anxiety to decrease as experience and proficiency increase may not apply to students of LCTLs.

3　Students' Perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety

While many studies have investigated quantitatively the relationship between foreign language anxiety and FL learning, other studies explored how students perceive foreign language anxiety. Using a questionnaire, Young (1990) studied types of classroom activities that caused foreign language anxiety in college and high school Spanish classrooms. Similarly, Price (1991) interviewed 10 college French students who had a higher level of anxiety, examining students' opinions of foreign language anxiety. Both studies discovered that foreign language anxiety was not simply related to speaking activities, but more specifically to speaking activities in front of their classmates and teachers, being "spot-lighted" (Young 1990). Further, teacher characteristics such as friendliness and helpfulness crucially influenced levels of anxiety students felt in FL classrooms.

Price's (1991) and Young's (1990) studies revealed students' actual experiences with anxiety in FL classrooms. They provided important suggestions to create a less anxiety-provoking FL classroom. However, both studies were carried out in CTL learning classrooms (Spanish and French). Since Samimy (1994) suggests that LCTL students may experience higher anxiety, I conducted a preliminary study in an LCTL classroom: Japanese.

Method

The present study investigates foreign language anxiety of students in introductory college Japanese courses who are native English speakers. Specifically, this study examines foreign language anxiety from students' perspectives and their expectations of how teachers can reduce foreign language anxiety in a Japanese classroom. These overlooked student perspectives are essential for drawing valid pedagogical implications. Research questions addressed were: 1) What are the sources of foreign language anxiety in an introductory Japanese course in college? 2) What are students' expectations

of how teachers can reduce foreign language anxiety? and 3) What factors are perceived as helpful in reducing foreign language anxiety among beginning-level students of Japanese in college?

To investigate these research questions, this study employed semi-structured interviews (Johnson 1992; Merriam 1998) as the date collection method. This qualitative research approach was selected for the following reasons. While it has become clearer that anxiety plays a crucial role in an FL classroom, studies in this field lack qualitative, in-depth analyses of foreign language anxiety. Samimy and Rardin (1994: 381) assert that "[t]he nature of affective states is personal, dynamic, and context-bound." Yet, the majority of previous studies consist of quantitative research that mainly employs a questionnaire. Such quantitative research methodology stresses researchers' objectivity and detaches them from the participants and the context in which the phenomenon of interest occurs. Moreover, such questionnaire studies as Horwitz et al., Gardner, and Young's allow us only to capture students' affective state at the time or their responses, losing developmental information (Schumann 1997). As a result, many of the previous studies lose dynamic aspects of foreign language anxiety and yield more limited analyses.

Thus, to explore the interplay between foreign language anxiety and FL learning, the present study attempts qualitative analysis of foreign language anxiety and cross-analysis with the quantitative results of the FLCAS. As a preliminary investigation, this study used only semi-structured interviews. However, this technique allows me to directly bring participants' voices to the study and thus gain deeper insights into their experiences of anxiety (Johnson 1992; Merriam 1998). This approach is particularly useful in building a foundation for future study.

1 Participants and Japanese Course Format

The participants in this study are two female college students of Japanese. Their first language is English. Lillian and Leah (pseudonyms) enrolled in an introductory Japanese course in a Midwestern university in the United States. They were selected based on accessibility. Table 1 shows their background data. Additionally, the two participants' motivations toward learning Japanese were similar: people-oriented (Tanaka 1997) and future career-oriented.

In the college Japanese course, both Lillian and Leah had two types of lessons and teachers. Two days a week, they took grammar lectures taught by a tenured faculty member in the department. These lectures were conducted both in English and Japanese. Three days a week, they took drill lessons in oral Japanese taught by graduate students called Associate Instructors (AIs).

Table 1　Participant Data

	Lillian	Leah
Age	18	20
Year of College	freshman	sophomore
Major	political science	business
Home state	Midwestern	Midwestern
FL in high school (years)	Japanese (4 years) Spanish (3 years)	Spanish (3 years)
FL in college (level)	Japanese (1st year) Spanish (2nd year)	Japanese (1st year)*
Experience in Japan	3-week stay with a Japanese family	None

*Leah did not take any foreign language courses in her freshman year.

2　Data Collection and Analysis

This study employed two methods to collect data: the FLCAS (Appendix A) and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B for a list of questions asked in the interviews). The FLCAS was adapted from Aida (1994), in which the term "foreign language" in the original FLCAS of Horwitz et al. (1986) was replaced with "Japanese language." The purpose of the FLCAS was to estimate and compare the participants' anxiety levels in their college Japanese course. Before the interview, the participants were asked to take the FLCAS based on their experiences in their Japanese course in college. The reliability of this instrument has been well established in the previous studies (Aida 1994; Horwitz 1986; Horwitz et al. 1986).

The majority of data, however, was gathered in the semi-structured interviews. Each interview, taped-recorded with permission, took about one and half hours. In the interviews, the two participants were asked about their experiences with anxiety in their college Japanese classrooms and ways to reduce foreign language anxiety. Their behaviors in Japanese classrooms were additionally ascertained to compare them with those suggested in previous studies as signs of anxiety.

To analyze data, the participants' FLCAS scores were compared with each other and with their responses in the interviews. The FLCAS contains 33 items on a five-point Likert scale. Thus, the possible score on the FLCAS ranges from 33 to 165 in which a lower score indicates a lower level of anxiety. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed, and the participants' responses were categorized into emerging themes. After data analysis, the participants received the transcripts and my interpretations to confirm if I had I correctly interpreted the data from the interviews. These member checks served to add credibility to the results.

Results

In this section, I will present findings from each participant's profile respectively.   In each profile, I will first give the results of the FLCAS, and then present findings from the interview that were categorized into emerging themes in the order of the three research questions addressed earlier above.

1 Profile 1: Lillian

1. 1 FLCAS Results

Lillian's score on the FLCAS was 87 out of a possible 165.   In comparison with the mean reported in Aida (1994) that is 96.7, her score is slightly lower. This result indicates that Lillian was relatively less anxious in her college Japanese classes than Aida's participants.   The data from her interview support this finding; she stated that she rarely felt anxiety in her Japanese classes.

1. 2 The Results from the Interview with Lillian

1. 2. 1   Sourses of Foreign Language Anxiety

With regard to sources of foreign language anxiety, Lillian mentioned tests. In the college Japanese course, she had two types of exams: written and oral. In the e-mail follow-up interview, she stated, "I always get nervous before a test because I never know if I studied well enough." The oral exams especially caused her nervousness because of their unfamiliarity to her. Since Lillian had rarely taken oral exams even in her high school Japanese course, she "was a little bit nervous because I had no idea what was going to happen" when she took the first oral test.

Lillian's responses above suggest that since she did not know how and what she would be tested on, she usually felt nervous.   In Lillian's case, thus, the ambiguity or unfamiliarity of the tests seems to have increased her anxiety in Japanese class.

1. 2. 2   Expectations of How Teachers can Reduce Foreign Language Anxiety

When asked about how she expects teachers to reduce anxiety, Lillian stated that she hopes her teachers will "guide me through it," giving an example as follows:

> [Teachers] give you a structure and you can fill it in [by] yourself, and going back to you later in class, they ask you again, fill it out using that same structure, the pattern that they gave on the board, without looking at it on the board.

Additionally, she also said that giving her enough time to practice in class would rid her of some of her nervousness.   These responses imply that Lillian expects her teachers, by giving her concrete instruction and sufficient

time to practice, to help her build confidence in new materials she learns.   In
other words, Lillian needs self-confidence to be less nervous in Japanese class.

1. 2. 3   Factors Helpful to Reduce Foreign Language Anxiety

Lillian said that she rearely felt nervous in class, resulting in her willing-
ness to take risks in speaking Japanese.   She stated that she did not hesitate
to volunteer when someone could not get an answer.   Lillian attributed such
a less-anxious state in Japanese class to 1) helpful teachers, 2) good relation-
ships with classmates, and 3) match of course content and exams.

1)   Helpful Teachers

Throughout the interview, Lillian commented positively on her teachers,
stating that they were all helpful, especially in error correction.   When asked
about her teacher and AIs, she said:

> The teacher [of the lecture] was really nice.   If we made mis-
> takes, she was like, "At least, you tried."   [The teacher and
> AIs] encouraged us to try.   If you made mistakes, they under-
> stood, and they helped you and so it was like, "Well, you need to
> fix that.   And we help you do it."   They were not just so
> critical.   They didn't look for mistakes, bad qualities.

Lillian also stated, "When you have questions, [the teacher and AIs] say
'That's [a] good question.   I need that one, too [to make the point clearer].'"
Lillian thought that such attitudes were so encouraging and helpful that they
facilitated students' Japanese study.   This seems more obvious in her com-
ments on one of her AIs.   According to her, this AI seemed less willing than
other AIs to help students in terms of asking questions.   He preferred that
Lillian and her classmates not ask him questions, which created tension in
class and made her a little uncomfortable.   To conclude, teachers' character-
istics or attitudes such as being helpful and encouraging played an important
role in reducing Lillian's anxiety in the college Japanese classroom.

2)   Good relationships with classmates

When asked about her classmates, Lillian described a good relationship with
them, particularly in the drill sessions.   Compared to her Spanish class, she
stated, "I think a lot of people who take Japanese were pretty nice people.
They are more friendly.   Japanese, for some reason, brings nicer people.
More, actually, more individual, unique kind of people."

In so saying, Lillian implied that her classmates' favorable characteristics
enabled her to get along well with them, which contributed to a good atmo-
sphere in the Japanese class.   Lillian described class atmosphere as "more
relaxed, not stressed.   Everyone just seemed relaxed."   In addition, the size
of the class created a less-anxious atmosphere.   In comparison to her first
semester Spanish class, Lillian said, "In the first semester, the Japanese class
was much smaller.   And I liked it better."   This comment suggests that
because of the small class size, she could know her peers better and feel more
comfortable with them.

3) Match of course content and exams

As discussed above, tests were a source of Lillian's anxiety. Nevertheless, when she realized that the content of the exams correlated with materials that she learned in class, her level of anxiety dropped. As for the written exams, she stated, "The whole test was usually gone over in class, like a lecture," implying that the content of written exams was the same as the course.

As for the oral tests that were new to Lillian, she said that she was nervous because she was not sure what she would be asked to do. Once the test started, however, she found it "not that hard" and felt less anxious since it consisted of questions and answers based on what she did in class. She said, "As long as you study, just a little bit, or pay attention in class, it's not like, they ask you some tricky questions or something, that's unusual." Here, it seems clear that Lillian's anxiety was reduced by correlation between materials covered in class and the content in the oral tests.

2 Profile 2: Leah

2.1 FLCAS Results

Leah's score on the FLCAS was 111, which is slightly higher than the mean of 96.7 reported in Aida (1994). In addition, Leah's score is higher than that of Lillian, indicating that Leah experienced a higher level of anxiety in the Japanese course than Lillian did.

2.2 The Results of the Interview

2.2.1 Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety

To describe sources of her anxiety in Japanese class, Leah said, "Whenever they called on me and asked the question in Japanese [I felt nervous]. I wasn't sure about my answer, you know." This response suggests that because Leah was insecure of her knowledge of Japanese, she felt most nervous when she was spot-lighted in class to speak in Japanese.

Being called on in speaking activities in FL classroom itself could cause the most anxiety (Price 1991; Young 1990). In Leah's case, the fact that she studied Japanese with those who had taken Japanese in high school seems to have caused much anxiety to her. Leah stated, "If I was wrong, you know, everybody answered, 'How can't she get [the] answer? You know, [I] wonder if everybody asks things because everybody else has taken it before."

Many of Leah's classmates received high school Japanese instruction and were more familiar with Japanese than Leah who had just started studying. This situation seems to have made Leah feel even more intimidated to speak Japanese, because her peers could easily and correctly answer questions, while she was struggling to do so.

2.2.2 Expectations of How Teachers Can Reduce Forign Language Anxiety

Responding to a question about her expectations of teachers, Leah stated

that when she feels anxious in speaking activities, she hopes that her teachers "[p]rod me" and "[k]eep encouraging" by comments like "Keep going.   You almost have it."   This response indicates that teachers' encouragement is what she expects to reduce her anxiety.   In addition, Leah stated that close relationships with her teachers would reduce her anxiety.   To make her feel comfortable, thus, she hopes her teachers make an effort to be friendly to her, talking to her even outside the classroom.

2.2.3   Factors Helpful to Reduce Foreign Language Anxiety

About anxiety in the college Japanese classroom, Leah expressed constant experience of nervousness.   Such a high level of anxiety can be seen in her unwillingness to volunteer in the Japanese class.   She stated that she did not "[v]olunteer, hardly.   I was nervous.   I didn't want everyone to look at me." As the course progressed, however, Leah became less anxious in her Japanese classes.   She gave the three reasons that: 1) she got to know more about her classmates, 2) the teachers were helpful, and 3) the course was well structured.

1)   Getting to Know Classmates

Leah said a good relationship with her classmates was important to study Japanese comfortably.   At first she felt more nervous in her college Japanese class than her high school Spanish class, because she did not know anyone in class.   In addition, many of those classmates had studied Japanese in high school and were more familiar with the language than she.   As Leah got to know her classmates well, however, she realized that "[those who took Japanese before] are not perfect in Japanese, either."   Furthermore, she found that they were nice and thus felt less intimidated.   She said that those who had taken Japanese prior to college helped and encouraged her in class. They understood it was her first year and told her not to compare herself to them, which did "not make me feel bad at all."

When Leah talked about her classmates, she was excited and showed favorable attitudes towards them.   She said, "We joked around, talked to each other inside and outside of [the] classroom," creating a good atmosphere in class:

> [The atmosphere of the class was] kind of "laid back" 'cause everybody could talk with each other.   And if you say something wrong, we look at each other and laugh with each other. Not *AT* each other, *WITH* each other [participant emphasis]. I liked the atmosphere a lot.

Leah clearly found a favorable classroom atmosphere as the course wore on. Such a friendly atmosphere enabled her to become more relaxed, less nervous in her Japanese class.

2)   Helpful Teachers

When asked about her teachers, Leah also showed a favorable attitude toward them, attributing this to their ability to make her feel less nervous in Japanese class.   For instance, Leah mentioned a particular drill session AI who suc-

cessfully reduced her anxiety.   According to Leah, this AI gave her time to observe her classmates so that she could understand what to do.   Moreover, this AI often had Leah and other students answer together in chorus.   As discussed above, being called on heightened Leah's nervousness since she was afraid to make mistakes in front of people who had known Japanese well enough to be able to answer correctly.   This particular AI, however, posed questions to some other students before Leah, providing her with models for activities.   This AI's use of chorus response also seems to have saved Leah from her most anxiety-provoking situation, "being spot-lighted."

The way that her teachers dealt with mistakes also alleviated Leah's fear of making mistakes.   Leah stated that her teacher in the lecture usually said things like "Thank you for trying" or "I'm glad you said that [because it is a common mistake and I would like to point it out]" when the students made mistakes.   Her drill session AIs often helped her by saying "Keep going. You almost have it."   Leah perceived these comments as encouraging.

That the lecture teacher and drill session AIs let the students ask for help from others was another factor that helped her feel less nervous:

> If I couldn't answer stuff, then, everyone else was asked to help
> out. [In the lecture, the teacher said,]   "Can anybody help?"
> [In drill sessions, AIs said]   "Ask classmates to help you out."
> It's good because they didn't make you feel stupid.

Leah described how her teacher and AIs corrected mistakes, "It's all right because everybody makes mistakes.   I understand you're first year.   You can't be perfect."   Leah said it was good "because [the teacher and AIs] didn't make you feel stupid."   She considered that such attitudes showed her teachers' willingness to help and encourage her, thus making her less anxious in class.

   3)   Well-structured Program
In the interview, Leah compared the college Japanese program to her high school Spanish one, favorably evaluating the structure of the Japanese program:

> Like, the structure [of the Japanese course], quiz every other
> day, homework every other day, lesson quiz, exam.   It's good
> structure as well here 'cause it makes you learn and makes you
> do homework.   For quizzes, [the course] makes us study.
> Here, they're structured very well.

This external structure of the well-organized syllabus of the college Japanese course seems to have helped Leah develop good study habits.   She felt increasingly comfortable as she began to understand how the curriculum worked.   Since the Japanese program was so well structured, she knew what she was expected to do throughout the semester, and this in turn reduced her anxiety.

Furthermore, the combination of lecture and drill session seems to have matched Leah's study:

> In lecture, [w]e just learned grammar, basically.　In drill, you have to speak, you do more interaction.　I think it's good.　If there wasn't drill at all, it wasn't going to help you very much. Because you need [to] have this, because in order to learn, understand a language, you need to speak every day.

This response indicates that Leah considered oral practice and interaction with others essential for FL learning.　In her high school Spanish class, she said, neither enough speaking activities nor interaction in Spanish were provided for her to learn as much Spanish as she learned Japanese in college. Her Japanese course gave not only a solid grammatical foundation for Japanese, but also opportunities to use it in speaking activities in the drill sessions. Leah perceived this combination to be helpful, which resulted in less anxiety as the course progressed.

Discussion

The present study examined foreign language anxiety in a college introductory Japanese course in terms of 1) sources of foreign language anxiety, 2) students' expectations of how teachers might reduce anxiety, and 3) factors that actually helped reduce anxiety.　These questions revealed three major factors affecting foreign language anxiety: teacher characteristics, a sound course program, and relationship with peers.　In this section, I will discuss each area of these major factors in relation to current and previous studies.

Initially, the student profiles in this study suggest that to reduce foreign language anxiety, students expect teachers to support them in learning Japanese by giving sufficient guidance and positive feedback.　This finding mirrors Price's (1991) and Young's (1990) conclusion that students basically want their teachers to be helpful and supportive instead of authoritarian, so that they can study FLs with less stress in class.

The two participants' teachers showed such positive characteristics.　Lillian and Leah described their teachers' anxiety-reducing qualities such as "helpful," "friendly," "undersanding," and "encouraging," which were typified in error correction.　Price (1991) reported that students of French in her study were afraid to make mistakes in class, and that teachers' negative attitudes toward their mistakes increased foreign language anxiety.　As Young's (1990) participants commented, however, Lillian and Leah's teachers reduced anxiety by not putting too much emphasis on mistakes.　When students made mistakes, their teachers appreciated　students' effort to try ("Thank you for trying"), or even thanked them for making mistakes ("I'm glad you said that [so that I can explain]").　Also, the teachers encouraged students who felt nervous about making mistakes to keep trying, saying

"Keep going. You almost have it." These positive attitudes resulted in lower foreign language anxiety in the Japanese class.

Secondly, the present study indicates that good relationships with peers play an important role in reducing foreign language anxiety. Lillian perceived her classmates as nice people and enjoyed learning Japanese with them in a friendly atmosphere. In Leah's case, her anxiety at being called on to speak an unfamiliar language (Japanese) in class concurs with previous studies (Price 1991; Young 1990). Moreover, Leah's anxiety was further heightened because her classmates had higher proficiency in Japanese than she did. Comparing herself to them, she felt less competent and more nervous. This supports Price's (1991: 106) speculation that this fear of speaking in an FL in front of classmates may be caused by students' beliefs that "they weren't doing a good job and that everyone else looked down on them."

The results of the FLCAS also indicate that Leah felt nervous about public speech in Japanese class; the two items that showed the biggest gaps between Lillian and Leah included "being called on." Additionally, Leah stated that she hesitated to volunteer to speak Japanese in class, while Lillian showed her willingness to take risks in speaking in Japanese. These two findings agree with Saito and Samimy (1996) and Samimy and Tabuse (1992) who assert a negative correlation between willingness to take risks in a Japanese class and levels of foreign language anxiety.

A portion of this fear of being spot-lighted seems to depend on inter-student relationships, which is clear in Leah's profile. Since Leah found that their classmates were helpful and understanding, she later felt more comfortable about speaking Japanese in front of them. This friendship with peers ultimately created a good, collaborative atmosphere in class. Young (1990: 550) states that FL students fear negative evaluation by their peers, suggesting it is important to "create a warm social environment." Leah's comment, "We laughed *WITH* each other, not *AT* each other [participant emphasis]," implies that friendship with her peers created an atmosphere in which the students were understanding rather than critical about others' mistakes, eliminating fear of negative evaluation by classmates. This finding agrees with Price's (1991: 107) participants who "mentioned that getting to know the other students helped them to feel more relaxed by reducing the fear of being ridiculed and taking away the feeling that the others are all smarter and more confident."

Lastly, this study identified the importance of curriculum organization. In Lillian's case, her anxiety, if she had any, stemmed from tests, especially oral exams, because the format was unfamiliar to her. This finding supports Young's (1991) claim that test anxiety is increased by format unfamiliarity and task ambiguity of tests. However, she felt less anxious when she knew that the tests came directly from class materials. This study's clear reflection of the structure of the Japanese course in the tests suggests that foreign language anxiety associated with tests can be reduced by correlating curricu-

lar content, materials, and test tasks.　Furhter, Leah's case supports Schulz's (1996) assertion that fewer discrepancies between teacher's and students' FL learning perspectives produce less negative effects on students.　Leah's belief that both formal grammar instruction and oral practice are necessary to learn Japanese was reflected in her Japanese course, alleviating her nervousness. In addition, a rigid, clear syllabus gave Leah a clear idea of teacher expectations and thus reduced her anxiety.　These findings may imply that foreign language anxiety can be decreased by programs that are well-planned and organized and that provide consistency between material learned in class and that on tests.

To conclude, this study's investigation of anxiety sources, students' expectations toward teachers, and factors that actually reduced anxiety found three important variables regarding foreign language anxiety: teacher attitudes, good relationships with peers, and a well-structured program.　Based on these findings, I will consider classroom applications in the following section.

Classroom Applications

The finding in the present study suggest that teachers need to be aware that their teaching method influences student anxiety.　Teachers' harsh, direct feedback on students' mistakes often increases anxiety (Price 1991; Young 1990).　Thus, when students are struggling with an answer, teachers may want to give them encouragement such as "Thank you for trying" and "Keep going.　You almost have it."　In addition, teachers need to be friendly rather than authoritarian when they correct students' errors, reminding the students that making mistakes is a natural part of language learning (Samimy 1994; Young 1990).　For example, instead of directly correcting students' errors like "*You said '*Senshu eiga o mimasu* (*last week I watch a movie),' but you should use the past tense '*Mimashita*'," teachers may want to repeat their utterances in a question form with the errors corrected, e.g., "*Watashi mo senshu eiga o mimashita.　Senshu eiga o mimashita ka?* (I also watched a movie last week.　Did you watch a movie last week?)"　This technique is effective in reducing anxiety in two ways: teachers can correct errors in an indirect, non-threatening way, and they can give students individual feedback.　By personally responding to individual students' utterances, teachers can show their attention and caring for the students.

Furthermore, giving the students specific directions or guidance regarding classroom activities, homework, or individual study outside of class may prevent them from getting confused and feeling anxious.　Teachers may want to check constantly whether the students have concerns about activities, materials, or homework, encouraging them not to leave questions unanswered.　Talking to the students outside of the classroom is also a good strategy.　Students will perceive such friendly and concerned attitudes as "helpful" and "understanding" and feel less nervous in the Japanese class.

Secondly, by helping the students build a good relationship with their classmates, teachers can create a more comfortable atmosphere in a Japanese classroom. As the participants stated, a smaller class may allow more opportunities for students to interact with each other, resulting in a less anxiety-provoking atmosphere (Price 1991). If possible, therefore, programs may want to keep the class size as small as possible so that all students can talk to each other. If impossible, pair or small group work in classroom activities may serve the same purpose. Such activities will increase the number of opportunities for students to closely communicate with their peers, enhancing student cohesiveness as well as communication skills in Japanese. They also will "allow the anxious students to practice the target language without the entire class as an audience" (Price 1991: 107) before they actually speak in public, thus reducing students' nervousness and fears of public embarrassment. Furthermore, Samimy (1994) suggests positive effects of pair or small group activities on students' voluntary participation and willingness to take risks, which facilitates Japanese learning.

Moreover, particularly at the beginning of the semester, teachers may need to start a lesson with self-introductions and interviews in pairs or small groups. In so doing, they can give the students opportunities to become familiar with classmates. The closer the students feel to each other, the less nervous they will feel about speaking and making mistakes. Allowing students to ask classmates for help is also beneficial. Creating such a cooperative atmosphere is in large part teachers' responsibility and is essential to reduce anxiety in Japanese classes. Finally, teachers need to develop a well-structured syllabus. Providing the students with homework, quizzes, and exams at regular intervals will help them have steady study habits. A well-structured program will let the students know how the Japanese course works and anticipate what they need to do to be successful in learning Japanese, resulting in lower level of anxiety. Teachers and curriculum designers may want to examine students' needs by needs analysis and reflect the results in the program. In so doing, they can fill in gaps between teacher and student expectations toward Japanese learning and have students feel more comfortable in the program. Further, teachers should be careful to include in exams only what the students covered during class sessions. In this way, teachers clearly indicate what students are expected to study for the exams. For example, as Young (1991) suggests, if teachers focus on oral proficiency in class, they should also test their students on speaking, not solely on writing with emphasis on grammatical accuracy. Such a matching between the course and exam content convey to students that they can perform well on the exams as long as they pay attention in class, reducing anxiety associated with the exams.

The conclusions and implications of this exploratory study may not apply to all Japanese classrooms. Thus, further studies are called for to gain deeper insights into foreign language anxiety. Future research should inves-

tigate whether variables identified in previous studies and this study are actually associated with reduced foreign language anxiety. It is also necessary to conduct a longitudinal study of foreign language anxiety in various settings such as secondary and post-secondary schools. Saito and Samimy (1996) assert that the role of foreign language anxiety becomes more important as instructional levels increase in a Japanese-learning context. By looking at changes of levels of foreign language anxiety over a period of time, we can gain deeper insights into important issues of foreign language anxiety as well as what reduces or increases anxiety as students become more proficient in Japanese.

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Appendix A: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Instruction: Circle the choice after each statement that best indicates your opinion.

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1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my Japanese class.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

2. I don't worry about making mistakes in my Japanese class.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in my Japanese class.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the
    Japanese class.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more Japanese language classes.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

6. During Japanese class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to
    do with the course.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at Japanese than I am.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

8. I am usually at ease during tests in my Japanese class.

    strongly   dísagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in Japanese class.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my Japanese class.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over Japanese classes.

    strongly   disagree   neither agree   agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

12. In Japanese class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my Japanese class.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

14. I would not be nervous speaking the Japanese language with native speakers.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

16. Even if I am well prepared for Japanese class, I feel anxious about it.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

17. I often feel like not going to my Japanese class.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

18. I feel confident when I speak in my Japanese class.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

19. I am afraid that my Japanese teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my Japanese class.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

21. The more I study for a Japanese test, the more confused I get.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for my language class.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

23. I always feel that the other students speak the Japanese language better than I do.
    strongly   disagree   neither agree agree   strongly
    disagree   nor disagree   agree

24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking Japanese in front of other students.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

25. Japanese class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

26. I feel more tense and nervous in my Japanese class than in my other classes.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my Japanese class.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

28. When I'm on my way to Japanese class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the Japanese teacher says.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak Japanese.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak Japanese.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of Japanese.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

33. I get nervous when the Japanese teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared
    in advance.
    strongly　　　　disagree　　　　neither agree　agree　　　　strongly
    disagree　　　　　　　　　　　nor disagree　　　　　　　　agree

Appendix B: Questions for the Interview

1) What do you think of when you hear the words "anxiety in a foreign language classroom"?
2) What kind of activities did you do in your Japanese class in college?
3) When did you feel anxiety / nervousness / worry in your current Japanese classes (lecture / drills)?
4) What do you want your teachers to do when you feel anxiety in the Jaspanese class?
5) What do you think your teachers actually did when you are feeling nervous in the Japanese class?