Anxiety in the College Japanese Language Classroom

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The purpose of this study was to investigate 2 potential sources of the anxiety of college learners of Japanese in oral practice: (a) an individual student's fear of negative evaluation, and (b) his or her self-perceived speaking ability. A survey was administered to 212 students in Japanese courses at 2 major universities. Using correlations and regression, the study found that: (a) An individual student's anxiety was higher as his or her fear of negative evaluation was stronger, and the strength of this tendency depended on the instructional level and the experience of going to Japan; (b) an individual student's anxiety was higher as he or she perceived his or her ability as lower than that of peers and native speakers; (c) the anxiety level of a male student became higher as he perceived himself less competent; and (d) the fear of negative evaluation and the self-perceived speaking ability did not interact to influence the anxiety level of an individual student.

FOR DECADES SCHOLARS HAVE BEEN INvestigating the anxiety that students experience in their foreign and second language (FL/L2) learning. To name a few, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991a, 1991c, 1994a, 1994b) conducted several studies to understand the mechanism of anxiety in L2 learning and to identify the effect of anxiety on learners' language achievement, while E. K. Horwitz and her colleagues (E. K. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) made significant contributions by developing an instrument to measure FL anxiety and by promoting interest in anxiety research and concern for learners' anxiety among FL educators. Although many studies (Aida, 1994; Ely, 1986; Gardner, Lalonde, Moorcroft, & Evers, 1987; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991b; Phillips, 1992; Young, 1986) identified the negative effect of students' anxiety on their performance and achievement, this author's primary interest lies in identifying the sources of anxiety in the classroom. Many students feel tenser and more nervous in FL class than in any other class (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991; E. K. Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989), and their anxiety seems to come predomi-

nantly from the speaking situation in class (E. K. Horwitz et al., 1986; Koch & Terrell, 1991; Price, 1991; Young, 1990). In light of today's professional interest in developing students' oral skills and in using proficiency-based assessment, the question of how to reduce students' negative anxiety should be addressed more than ever. We need to continue our efforts to identify the sources of anxiety, so that teachers will be able to prevent it, respond to it appropriately, and help students enjoy learning a FL.

There are many potential sources of learners' anxiety in the FL classroom. After her review of anxiety research, Young (1991) categorized these sources into six types: personal and interpersonal anxieties (e.g., self-esteem, communication apprehension); learner beliefs about language learning; instructor beliefs about language teaching; instructor-learner interactions (e.g., teachers' harsh manner of correcting student mistakes); classroom procedures (e.g., speaking in front of peers); and testing. One might suspect that there are also other factors such as demands and difficulty of the course, class size, and so on. As Young (1991) argued, personal and interpersonal anxieties have been the most commonly discussed in many anxiety studies. Evidence for this type of anxiety source, however, has been cited mostly from qualitative studies, and quanti-

tative inquiries have not been as abundant as might be expected. It was, therefore, this author's intention to conduct a quantitative investigation, using a large number of subjects, into selected possible sources of anxiety. The two potential sources of anxiety addressed in this study are (a) fear of negative evaluation as a personality trait and (b) self-perception of speaking ability in the target language.

FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION

Fear of negative evaluation is defined as "an apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson & Friend, 1969, as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Horwitz et al. (1986) suggested that students' fear of negative evaluation is provoked by the nature of the FL classroom, where student performances are continually evaluated by the only fluent speaker, the teacher. They further mentioned that "students may also be acutely sensitive to the evaluations—real or imagined—of their peers" (p. 128). Although a subsequent study by Horwitz (1986) found a moderate correlation between FL anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, this personality trait has attracted little attention in other research on language anxiety.

Whether or not they have personalities that fear negative evaluation, many students fear making mistakes in speaking practice in the class. In Young's (1990) survey study, most Spanish learners indicated that they would be willing to participate voluntarily in classroom practice if they were not afraid of saying the wrong thing. Price's (1991) qualitative interview study also found that students were afraid of making errors in pronunciation. Students' concern about speaking in front of their peers was also recognized as a situational source of anxiety in FL classrooms (Koch & Terrell, 1991; Price, 1991; Young, 1990). Given these results, students whose personalities tend to fear negative evaluation seem to be strong candidates for experiencing anxiety in FL classrooms.

SELF-PERCEPTION OF SPEAKING ABILITY IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE

Learners' self-perception of their ability has been frequently discussed as a strong source of anxiety. For example, Horwitz et al. (1986) argued that much of the language learner's anxiety stems from the threat to the learner's self-concept of competence. Foss and Reitzel (1991) discussed

the need for an anxiety model that includes learners' self-perception. Young (1991) considered that students who start out with a self-perceived low ability level in a FL or L2 are the most likely to be anxious in the classroom.

A review of the literature shows some evidence of this argument in qualitative studies. Price (1991) found that anxious learners believed that their language skills were weaker than those of the other students in class and that everyone else was looking down on them. This comparison of their ability with that of their peers in the learners' minds was vividly described in language learners' journals in Bailey's (1983) study. She concluded: "Anxiety can be caused and/or aggravated by the learner's competitiveness when he sees himself as less proficient than the object of comparison" (p. 27). FL learners have another source of anxiety: In their minds, they compare their ability in the target language with that of native speakers of the target language. The students who were afraid of making errors in pronunciation in Price's (1991) study believed that they were not pronouncing words as native speakers would and felt embarrassed by their inability to pronounce correctly.

Among all the skills taught and presented in the FL class, speaking skill is usually the first thing that learners compare with that of peers, teachers, and native speakers. Many students also believe that speaking is the most important skill they need to learn in language courses (Guntermann, Hendrickson, & de Urioste, 1996). Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that low self-perception of speaking ability is likely to be a source of anxiety.

INTERACTION BETWEEN FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AND SELF-PERCEPTION

If both fear of negative evaluation and self-perception of speaking ability can affect the anxiety of FL learners, do these two variables interact to affect learners' anxiety level? Is the effect of self-perceived ability on anxiety greater for individuals who have a stronger fear of negative evaluation than for individuals who have a weaker fear of negative evaluation? The author considered this scenario to be likely. Although no language anxiety research has examined the interaction of these two variables on anxiety level, one theory of social anxiety in cognitive psychology posits a related hypothesis.

According to self-presentational theory (Leary, 1983b; Leary & Kowalski, 1995; Schlenker &

Leary, 1982, 1985), social anxiety "arises whenever people are motivated to make a desired impression on others, but are not certain that they will do so" (Schlenker & Leary, 1982, p. 645). Given this view, social anxiety is a function of two constructs: the motivation to make a desired impression on others and the doubt that one will be able to do so. As both the level of such motivation and the level of such doubt rise, the level of social anxiety increases. This theory further hypothesizes that the influence of these two constructs on anxiety level is multiplicable. Therefore, it hypothesizes that the two constructs interact with each other to affect anxiety level. It is also important to note that the authors of this theory believe that the individual's chronic concern over interpersonal evaluation, such as fear of negative evaluation, is one of the major factors influencing level of motivation and that the individual's self-perception of his or her ability relevant to performance is one of the major factors affecting the level of doubt.[1]

Although one may argue that the anxiety experienced in the FL class is not entirely a social anxiety, a large part of it seems to be associated with interpersonal anxieties (see Young, 1991). The importance of self-presentational theory for this study is that it not only suggests the reasons for which the fear of negative evaluation and the self-perception of ability can affect anxiety level but also suggests the possibility that these factors may interact to influence anxiety level. Therefore, this study included the question of interaction between dispositional fear of negative evaluation (which may influence a learner's desire to make a good impression) and self-perceived speaking ability (which may influence the learner's doubt in his or her successful performance) in terms of their influence on anxiety level in the Japanese FL classroom.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND ANXIETY

Finally, a discussion of anxiety among Japanese FL learners is in order. Japanese language instruction has become more and more common in the United States on both the collegiate and the precollegiate levels. At the same time, interest in anxiety research has also increased among Japanese language professionals. The results of some studies of Japanese FL learners' anxiety differ somewhat from those of French learners: The Japanese learners' anxiety level increased as the instruction continued (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992) whereas the anxiety of French FL learners de-

creased (Gardner, Smythe, & Brunet, 1977; Gardner, Smythe, & Clement, 1979); advanced-level students scored higher on anxiety than did lower-level students in Japanese courses (Saito & Samimy, 1996) whereas the anxiety of advanced-level French learners was the lowest (Gardner, Smythe, & Brunet, 1977); and for Japanese FL learners, the experience of going to Japan had a significant impact on anxiety level (Aida, 1994) whereas going to French-speaking countries did not produce a significant difference in anxiety level of French learners (Caruso, 1996).

It is possible to attribute these results to the well-known difficulty of the Japanese language or to the much-discussed differences between Japanese and American cultures. And yet, we should not forget other factors that may have contributed to those findings. For instance, students who are willing to learn Japanese may be different in various ways from students of the more commonly taught languages. There may also be some differences in the nature of the teachers, the instructional methods, the curriculum, and so on. It should be made clear that the present study does not intend to emphasize the differences between Japanese FL learners and learners of other languages. Rather, it is hoped that this study will add more empirical data to the study of anxiety in FL learners, including learners of Japanese. The focus of the study is on two psychological factors—the fear of negative evaluation and the self-perception of speaking ability in the target language—as potential sources of anxiety in the classroom.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The three major research questions of this study are:

1. Is the anxiety level of an individual college-level Japanese learner related to his or her dispositional fear of negative evaluation?
2. Is the anxiety level of an individual college-level Japanese learner related to the self-perception of his or her speaking ability in Japanese?
3. Do fear of negative evaluation and self-perception of speaking ability in Japanese interact to relate to the anxiety level of individual Japanese learners?

Because the situation of speaking the target language in a classroom has been identified as highly anxiety-provoking, the focus of this study is limited to the anxiety that students experience during oral practice in the FL classroom. The hypothesized responses to all the above research

questions were "Affirmative." For Questions 1 and 2, a closer investigation was made to determine whether or not the relationship between major variables was dependent upon another individual factor, such as instructional level, gender, previous experience, and so on. No hypotheses were formulated for this investigation.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 212 students enrolled in Japanese language courses at two major state universities in the midwestern United States (University A and University B hereafter).[2] Of the participants, 103 students were from University A and 109 students were from University B. There were 100 students (47.2%) in the elementary level (enrolled in the first semester of Japanese courses), 53 students (25.0%) in the intermediate level (the third semester), and 59 students (27.8%) in the advanced level (the fifth and seventh semesters). There were 121 male students (57.1%) and 91 female students (42.9%). There were 41 students in their first year at the universities, 43 in the second year, 48 in the third year, 61 in the fourth year, 16 graduate students, and 3 others. Native speakers of English constituted 79.2% of the students (168 students), while there were 20 Chinese speakers (9.4%), 16 Korean speakers (7.5%), 5 Indonesian speakers (2.4%), 1 Russian speaker (.5%), and 2 speakers of other languages not identified. Only 14 students (6.6%) answered that they used (or had used) Japanese to speak with one or both of their parents. A total of 75 students (35.5%) had stayed or lived in Japan for varying lengths of time.

Instruments

A 70-item multiple-choice survey (see Appendix A) was created for this study. It contained (a) a background questionnaire, (b) the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (FNE; Cronbach Alpha = .90), (c) the Japanese Class Anxiety Scale (JCAS; α = .93), and (d) three kinds of self-ratings of Japanese speaking ability: Self-Rating Can-Do Scale (SR–CDS; α = .92), Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study (SR–CL; α = .92), and Self-Rating Expected Perception by the Japanese (SR-EPJ; α = .92).

The background questionnaire asked for the following information: (a) the name of the participant's university, (b) the current level of Japa-

nese study (i.e., first, third, fifth, or seventh semester), (c) the course and section number, (d) the participant's gender, age, year in college, and native language, (e) whether the participant used Japanese as a L2 to talk with his or her parents, (f) whether he or she had studied Japanese in school before entering college, (g) the length of time the participant had been studying Japanese, (h) the total length of time of any stays in Japan, and (i) the grade the participant had in his or her most recent Japanese course. All of these items were considered to be possible factors that could influence anxiety level and were used for the subsequent data analyses.

With consideration for the time allowed to administer the questionnaire, this study used the revised and shortened version of the FNE Scale (Watson & Friend, 1969) developed by Leary (1983a). It measures the degree to which the respondent experiences apprehension at the prospect of being evaluated negatively. None of the 12 items on the FNE describes FL learning situations. The items are answered on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 points (*extremely characteristic of me*) to 1 point (*not at all characteristic of me*).

The JCAS was created for this study by shortening and modifying the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986). To assess the degree to which participants feel nervous during oral practice in class, some of the original FLCAS items were eliminated, such as the ones asking about concern over grades, discomfort in speaking the language outside the classroom, and anxiety over tests. Each of the 21 items of the JCAS is scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 points (*strongly agree*) to 1 point (*strongly disagree*).

Finally, this study used three measures of self-ratings of speaking proficiency, and each measure was treated separately in the data analyses. The SR–CDS was created by modifying the Can Do (Speaking) measure developed by Clark (1981) to Japanese language situations. Each item of this 15-item scale asked the respondent to rate his or her difficulty in performing a certain task orally in Japanese. The level of difficulty of the tasks assessed in the scale varies from the elementary level to the advanced level. Each item is scored on a 3-point Likert scale: 3 (*quite easily*), 2 (*with some difficulty*), and 1 (*with great difficulty or not at all*). The second self-rating, SR–CL, was created specifically for this study. Using this 4-item scale, the respondent assessed his or her Japanese speaking proficiency for his or her current level of study in the areas of pronunciation,

fluency, grammatical accuracy, and overall speaking ability by choosing one answer from 5 points (*very good*), 4 (*good*), 3 (*fairly good*), 2 (*relatively poor*), and 1 (*poor*). By deliberately asking the respondent to take his or her level of study into consideration, this scale was designed to assess the respondent's self-perception of his or her ability as compared to that of peers. The final measure of self-rating, SR–EPJ, was also created for this study in order to assess the respondent's self-perception of his or her ability as compared to that of native speakers. As in the previous self-rating, this measure had four items that assessed pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy, and overall speaking ability. It required the respondent to predict how a native speaker of Japanese would rate his or her Japanese speaking proficiency by choosing one answer from 5 (*very good*), 4 (*good*), 3 (*fairly good*), 2 (*relatively poor*), and 1 (*poor*).

Procedure

The author visited the classrooms of all the participants in the 7th week of the fall semester and administered the survey during class time. After the survey forms were collected, the data were analyzed with the aid of the computer program SPSS (see Appendix B for descriptive statistics for major variables and correlations among them).

For research questions 1 and 2, scatter plots were first created to examine visually the relationships between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable.[3] Then Pearson correlation was computed between those variables and a *t*-test was performed for its significance. Next, a closer investigation was made to determine whether or not the relationship between the variables depended on another individual factor. The factors considered in this examination were 12 items that were obtained from the questionnaire of the survey. The participants were divided into groups according to the factors and scatter plots were constructed to compare the regression lines of the groups. Then multiple regression analyses were performed to determine if the lines were significantly different between two different groups. When the factors contained nondichotomous scales, such as instructional levels, year in college, length of time studying Japanese, and so on, a number of ways of grouping were examined, and the same set of analyses was conducted for each case. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients were calculated for each group and *t*-tests were performed for their significance.

As mentioned before, the three self-ratings were treated separately in the examination for research question 2 because the author considered that they represented quite different types of self-perception about Japanese speaking ability.

For research question 3, multiple regression analyses were performed to create a model to predict anxiety level. More specifically, a backward elimination procedure was employed to identify which variables among the fear of negative evaluation and the three self-ratings of Japanese speaking ability were negligible in predicting Japanese class anxiety. Because the fear of negative evaluation and the self-rating for the current level were found to predict anxiety level, a two-way ANOVA was then performed to determine whether or not there was an interaction between those two variables in terms of their relationship to anxiety level.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: Is the Anxiety Level of an Individual College-Level Japanese Learner Related to His or Her Dispositional Fear of Negative Evaluation?

The scatter plot (Figure 1) indicates a positive correlation between an individual's fear of negative evaluation and his or her anxiety level. The correlation coefficient was found to be significant ($r = .316$**; $p = .000$; $n = 211$). Thus, the tendency was that the higher an individual's fear of negative evaluation, the higher his or her anxiety in the classroom. Among all the factors from the background questionnaire considered in the subsequent examination (see Appendix A), only the instructional level and the experience of living or staying in Japan were found to influence the relationship between Japanese class anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

In Figure 1, the regression line of advanced-level students is quite different from and steeper than that of intermediate- and elementary-level students. The multiple regression analysis proved that this difference was statistically significant (see Appendix C).[4] In addition, the correlation between Japanese class anxiety and fear of negative evaluation for advanced-level students ($r = .540$**; $p = .000$; $n = 58$) was much stronger than that for intermediate- and elementary-level students ($r = .237$**; $p = .002$; $n = 153$). With these findings, it was determined that the anxiety level of advanced-level students was more strongly influenced by their fear of negative evaluation than was the anxiety level of intermediate- and elementary-level students.

FIGURE 1

The Relationship between Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation (Advanced Level vs. Intermediate and Elementary Levels)
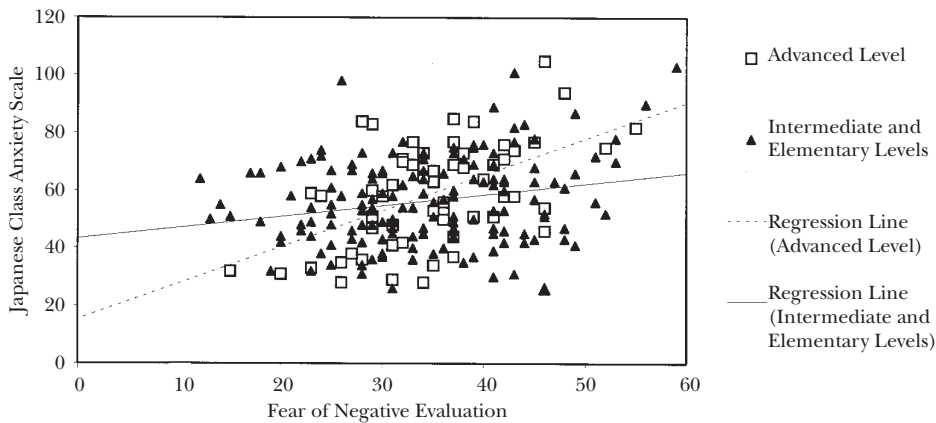

Figure 2 shows the regression lines of students who had spent some time in Japan and of those who had spent no time in Japan. The regression line of the former was much steeper than that of the latter, and a multiple regression analysis (see Appendix D)[5] showed that the difference between the lines was statistically significant. The former group showed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .496**$; $p = .000$; $n = 74$) whereas the latter group showed a significant but small correlation ($r = .231**$; $p = .003$; $n = 136$). Therefore, the anxiety level of students who had spent time in Japan appears to be more strongly influenced by their fear of negative evaluation than that of students who had spent no time in Japan.

Research Question 2: Is the Anxiety Level of an Individual College-Level Japanese Learner Related to the Self-Perception of His or Her Speaking Ability in Japanese?

The examination of scatter plots and correlations showed that there was a significant negative relationship between anxiety and two of the self-ratings, SR–CL and SR–EPJ. However, there was no significant relationship between anxiety and SR-CDS. See Figures 3 through 5 for the scatter

FIGURE 2

The Relationship between Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation (Some Time Spent in Japan vs. No Time Spent in Japan)
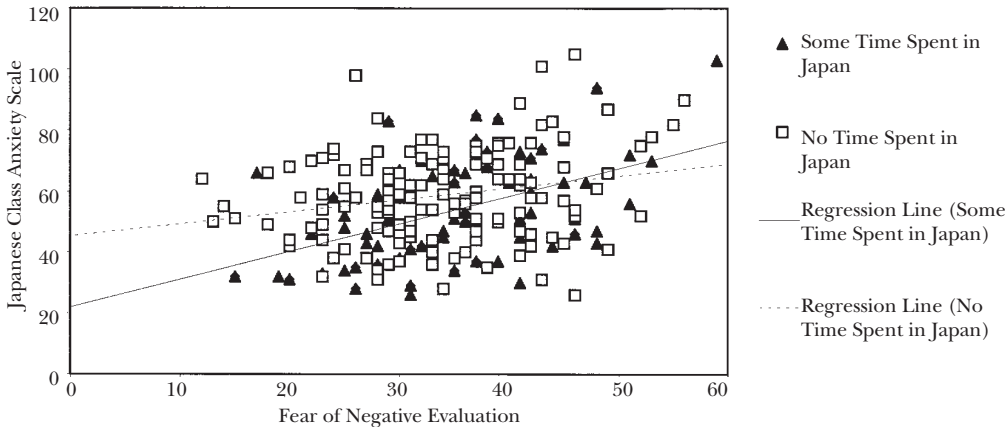
FIGURE 3
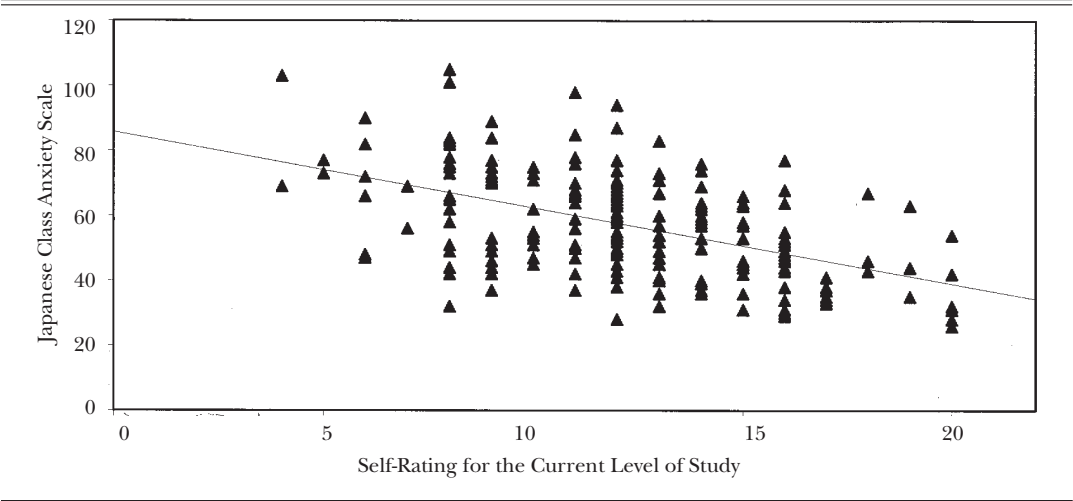The Relationship between Anxiety and Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study

FIGURE 4
The Relationship between Anxiety and Self-Rating Expected Perception by the Japanese

FIGURE 5
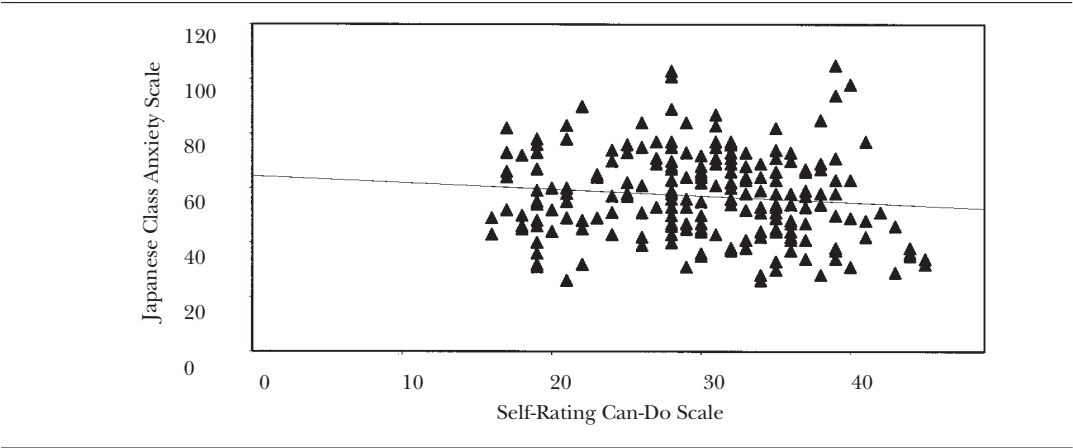The Relationship between Anxiety and Self-Rating Can-Do Scale

TABLE 1
Correlations between Japanese Class Anxiety and
Three Self-Ratings

Dependent Variable: Japanese Class Anxiety Independent Variables	r	p	n
SR–CDS	−.106	.062	212
SR–CL	−.509**	.000	212
SR–EPJ	−.389**	.000	212

Note. SR–CDS = Self-Rating Can-Do Scale; SR–CL = Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study; SR–EPJ = Self-Rating Expected Perception by the Japanese.

plots and Table 1 for the summary of the correlations between Japanese class anxiety and the three self-ratings.

Next, as for research question 1, all the other individual factors from the survey questionnaire (see Appendix A) were considered in terms of their possible influence on the relationships between Japanese language anxiety and each of the three self-ratings. It was found that none of the factors influenced the two significant negative relationships between anxiety and SR–CL or between anxiety and SR–EPJ. In other words, these relationships were found to be the same regardless of the other student characteristics considered in this study.

When the same close examination was conducted for the relationship between anxiety and SR–CDS, it yielded two significant findings that offer possible reasons for the nonsignificance of this relationship. One possible reason is a problem of the SR-CDS: The majority of the elementary-level students at University B scored consis-

tently low on the SR-CDS. As Figure 6 shows, they scored lower than the students in all of the other five groups, regardless of their anxiety levels, and thus created a distinct cluster that was separate from all the other cases that were mixed together. The cases in this separate cluster were large in number and located almost vertically, which made it very difficult for the correlation of the entire sample to be significant. Therefore, the nonsignificant relationship between anxiety and this type of self-rating appears to result in part from the fact that the SR–CDS failed to produce varied scores from one group of students.[6]

The other finding in this close investigation was a significant gender difference. Figure 7 shows that the regression line of male students was steeper than that of female students. This difference was found to be significant by a multiple regression analysis (see Appendix E).[7] The correlation between anxiety and SR–CDS of male students was significant and negative ($r = −.292**$; $p = .001$; $n = 121$), whereas that of female students was found to be nonsignificant ($r = .083$; $p = .433$; $n = 91$).[8] Thus, the anxiety level of an individual male student was higher as he perceived his performance in tasks in spoken Japanese to be less competent, whereas for an individual female student there was no such relationship between her anxiety level and her self-perception of her speaking ability as measured by the SR–CDS. Considering that there were a large number of female students in this study, the nonsignificant correlation for female students, as well as the consistently low scores on the SR–CDS of one specific group of students, may have contrib-

FIGURE 6
The Relationship between Anxiety and Self-Rating Can-Do Scale (Universities and Instructional Levels Considered)

FIGURE 7
The Relationship between Anxiety and Self-Rating Can-Do Scale (Gender Considered)
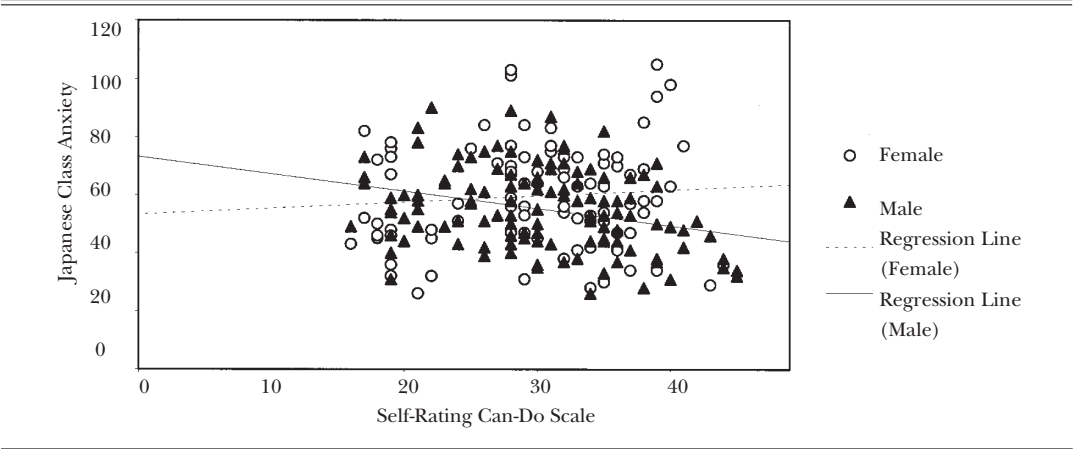
uted to the nonsignificant correlation of the entire sample.

Research Question 3: Do Fear of Negative Evaluation and Self-Perception of Speaking Ability in Japanese Interact to Relate to the Anxiety Level of Individual Japanese Learners?

A backward elimination procedure of multiple regression analysis found that, among the FNE and the three self-ratings of Japanese speaking ability, the combination of the FNE and the SR–CL was the most appropriate model of predictors of anxiety level of this sample.[9] These predictors accounted for 33.9% of the variance of the scores on the JCAS in this study. (See Appendix F for the details of the multiple regression analysis.)

After this finding was noted, further analysis was conducted. The participants were divided into two groups according to the level of their scores on the FNE (scores of 34 and above vs. scores of 33 and under) and their scores on the SR–CL (scores of 12 and above vs. scores of 11 and under). Then, a two-way ANOVA was performed. The result is shown in Table 2. The effects of both variables on anxiety level were significant, but the interaction of these effects was not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The Relationship between Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation

This study found that fear of negative evaluation was a source of anxiety in the Japanese FL classroom, a result that is consistent with Hor-

TABLE 2
Joint Influence of Fear of Negative Evaluation and Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study on Japanese Class Anxiety

		Two-Way ANOVA			
Dependent Variable: Japanese Class Anxiety					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Significance of *F*
Main Effects					
(combined)	12360.800	2	6180.406	31.226	.000*
FNE	3069.500	1	3069.500	15.508	.000*
SR–CL	9356.020	1	9356.020	47.270	.000*
2-Way Interaction					
FNE × SR–CL	431.139	1	431.139	2.178	.141
Explained	12986.400	3	4328.789	21.871	.000*
Residual	40970.900	207	197.927		
Total	53957.300	210	256.939		

Note. FNE = Fear of Negative Evaluation; SR–CL = Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study.

witz's (1986) findings for the French and Spanish classrooms. Another important finding was that the impact of this personality trait on anxiety level varied depending on the participants' instructional level and on the experience of going to Japan. The next section will discuss possible reasons for this finding.

Let us consider, first, important differences between the advanced levels and the lower levels of instruction. Compared to the elementary and intermediate levels that focus on teaching basic verbal skills and that may have occasional English explanations by the instructor, advanced-level instruction seeks to develop more authentic and sophisticated communication skills in an exclusively Japanese language environment. This increase in the difficulty of instruction in advanced-level classes may cause some students to fear the possibility of being negatively evaluated by their teachers or peers more strongly than they did at the lower levels. Students with a strong disposition to fear negative evaluation are the likeliest candidates for increased anxiety in the advanced-level classroom. Another difference between the advanced levels and the lower levels is the students' amount of knowledge of the target language. Because experienced language learners have probably acquired much more knowledge than less experienced language learners, they may have more chances of noticing their own errors in speaking. In particular, when they make errors in relatively easy expressions that they learned in earlier stages of language study, some students are ashamed and embarrassed. It is very likely that students with a strong fear of negative evaluation are vulnerable to these feelings. Another possibility is that some teachers at the advanced levels might not be as generous as teachers at the lower levels in giving praise or positive rewards to learners' responses because they expect more from their students as the levels progress.[10] It is possible that students with a strong fear of negative evaluation may become progressively more anxious in advanced-level classes where the teachers may be stricter or less generous with praise than teachers in lower-level classes.

Next comes the question of why the disposition to fear negative evaluation influenced the anxiety of students who had spent at least some time in Japan more strongly than it did the anxiety of students who had never been to Japan. The author's speculation is that the students with a strong fear of negative evaluation were very aware of their image as experienced people who had actually been to Japan and believed that they

were expected to be more proficient than those who had never been to Japan. Because they put pressure on themselves to fulfill that image, they ended up becoming more anxious in the classroom. However, students with little fear of negative evaluation and who had spent some time in Japan were likely to be free from such self-expectations. Thus, these students may have been able to use their experience in Japan to their advantage by feeling even more relaxed than they would have felt if they had never been to Japan.

The findings of this study certainly suggest that teachers should make an effort to respond appropriately to their students' fear of negative evaluation. Because it is a personality trait that is hard to eliminate, teachers may need to identify which students have a strong fear of negative evaluation and consider supportive ways of treating them in and outside of the classroom. For example, these students may need more clear, positive reinforcement to counter their constant fear of negative evaluation. Teachers should be encouraged to show them special consideration by making positive comments in class, in private conversations in the teacher's office, or on the students' homework sheets or journals whenever possible. The results of this examination also warn teachers of Japanese not to expect advanced-level students or students with the experience of going to Japan to be less anxious than others. Even those students can be quite prone to anxiety if they happen to have a strong fear of negative evaluation. Teachers should reexamine their expectation and treatment of such individuals.

The Relationship between Anxiety and Self-Perceived Ability in Speaking Japanese

This study revealed that students feel more anxious in the FL classroom when they perceive their own speaking ability as poorer than that of their peers and native speakers of Japanese. It is striking that this tendency was found in students who differed in other individual background factors. A student's self-perception of his or her ability compared to that of his or her peers should be carefully considered because of its strong relationship to anxiety level. Because FL instruction, more than any other subject, displays the performance of everyone present in the classroom, it may be inevitable that most FL students will be conscious of how well they are performing in comparison to other students. In such an environment, teachers who want to reduce their students' anxiety should structure their classroom practices and activities so that students will not be

forced to be competitive and so that individual differences in performance will not be too noticeable. For instance, the teacher could include extensive comprehension practice and choral work before calling on individual students. Pair work and group activities could be incorporated into most class periods. Teachers should also strive to create a sense of community in the classroom so that all the students know each other very well and can support each other regardless of differences in ability. Along with these general classroom strategies, teachers should consider paying extra attention to students who are not performing well, because these students are likely to have a low self-perception of ability and feel anxious in the classroom, which further hinders their learning. Identifying these students and helping them from the early stages of their FL study (by providing tutors or training in study skills, for example) is an important step that teachers should take and should be more emphasized.

One important question should be raised here, however: Does a student's self-perception accurately reflect his or her actual abilities? Some students, especially individuals with low self-esteem, may rate their abilities lower than they really are. In that case, it would be most important to help those individuals eliminate the overly negative image of themselves. Regrettably, the present study did not include a more objective measure of evaluating students' ability (such as an evaluation by their teachers) to compare to the self-evaluation. Using such a measure in future studies along with self-perceptions of ability would shed light on this question.

After taking steps to reduce anxiety triggered by students comparing their ability to that of their peers, how can teachers lessen student anxiety that stems from the self-perception of insufficient ability as compared to that of native speakers? It is not easy to tell students not to compare themselves with native speakers. After all, they are always expected to learn from tapes and videos of native speakers in communication with one another. Furthermore, when their teachers are native speakers (as they were in this study), students are exposed to the expert language level of native speakers on a daily basis. Language teachers should watch for learners who immediately set their goals as high as the level of native speakers, because this unrealistic expectation inevitably makes them perceive their ability as insufficient and causes them anxiety. Language teachers should discuss with the class reasonable standards or short-term goals in language learning and incorporate standards of evaluation that encourage

those reasonable goals. Young (1991) argued that an approach such as giving a half point for linguistic accuracy and the other half point for successful communication when grading students' oral interviews can help students "get the message that instructors are equally interested in what they have to say as in how they say it, and this may lead to a reduction in anxiety" (p. 433). Perhaps students need to have more exposure to speakers whose proficiency is not necessarily native or near-native and yet function well in the target language environment. Then they may realize that it is all right not to be as perfect as native speakers.

Finally, the present study attempted to examine whether or not how an individual student perceives his or her competency in performing various tasks in spoken Japanese influences anxiety. The nonsignificant relationship obtained in this examination should be treated with caution because of the flaw in the SR–CDS designed for this study. Nevertheless, the gender difference that emerged is worth noting. The speaking tasks on the SR–CDS consist of general tasks that an adult should be able to perform in order to function well in an authentic Japanese language environment. The present study showed that a student's self-perception of his or her ability to perform these types of tasks affected the anxiety level of male students, but not that of female students. Japanese programs like the ones in this study commonly attract many male students because they offer the pragmatic advantage of Japanese language skills in business or in scientific or technical fields. Students taking Japanese for career reasons may have been concerned about their ability in Japanese because it could affect their success in their future careers. In future studies, consideration of the different motivations among students for taking Japanese courses might help find the cause for the gender difference revealed in this study. It is also possible that female students focus more than male students do on grades or on how well they perform or achieve within their current learning materials. Their anxiety, therefore, might not be related as much as that of males to concern over performance on such general tasks as those found in the SR–CDS. At any rate, the gender difference in the relationship between anxiety and this type of self-perception should be explored further.

Interaction between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Self-Perceived Ability to Speak Japanese

The study rejected the author's hypothesis that there is an interaction between fear of negative

evaluation and self-perceived speaking ability that affects anxiety level. Therefore, although the students with a strong fear of negative evaluation and the students with low self-perceived ability showed high anxiety, the effect that fear of negative evaluation had on anxiety did not depend on the level of self-perceived ability, nor did the effect of self-perceived ability depend on the level of fear of negative evaluation.

It should be emphasized that the present study was never intended to test self-presentational theory. Rather, being inspired by the theory, the author included the question of interaction between the fear of negative evaluation and self-perceived ability in terms of its effect on anxiety because the theory claims that each of these variables affects each of the two distinct constructs of anxiety that have multiplicable effect on anxiety level (i.e., one's motivation to make a desired impression on others and doubt that one will be able to do so). There are many other variables that, according to the theory, have an effect on the two constructs of anxiety, such as: scrutiny and conspicuousness and the evaluative implication of the performance, which affect an individual's motivation; and attributes of others who are present and an individual's past experience, which affect the individual's doubt. If one wishes to test self-presentational theory by using language learners' anxiety, it would be necessary to include all of the variables cited by the theory and find appropriate means of quantifying them.

CONCLUSION

This study found that students' dispositional fear of negative evaluation and their self-perceived speaking ability as compared to that of peers and native speakers were sources of anxiety in the college Japanese FL classroom. Fear of negative evaluation influenced anxiety more strongly for advanced-level students than for intermediate- and elementary-level students and more for students who had spent at least some time in Japan than for students who had never been to Japan. Anxiety among male students was influenced by their perception of their ability to perform various tasks in spoken Japanese, whereas female students did not show this tendency. Finally, the fear of negative evaluation and self-perceived ability in speaking Japanese did not interact to influence the anxiety level of individual students.

It is hoped that these findings will motivate classroom teachers to identify anxious students and provide a supportive learning environment for them. Future research should be encouraged to replicate some parts of this study or revise or expand it so that these sources of anxiety in the language classroom will be further clarified and handled appropriately, thereby promoting the improvement of language learning for all learners.

NOTES

[1] Leary (1983b) stated that few studies had explicitly tested self-presentational theory as a whole although most available research is consistent with the theory if viewed post hoc. The lack of studies testing the theory is understandable because it is an extremely broad theory that attempts to explain the level of social anxiety through two main constructs (i.e., one's motivation to make a desired impression on others and doubt that one will be able to do so), each of which has many potential factors.

[2] These universities shared many similarities, such as a large student population, ranking within each state, and teachers and teaching assistants who were all native speakers of Japanese. A survey administered to all the teachers and teaching assistants did not reveal much difference in terms of the nature of instruction (e.g., methodologies employed, degree of emphasis in skill training, use of English in class, teaching strategies related to students' anxiety) between the universities or among the multiple sections. University A provided more contact hours than University B in the first- to third-year levels and the textbooks used at the two universities were different at all levels.

[3] Although a scatter plot is not a tool used to determine the significance of the relationship of two variables, the author considered that it was important to examine visually the distribution of cases in the scatter plot first, so that she could then use and interpret appropriately the results of the planned statistical analyses (i.e., correlation coefficients and multiple regression analyses in this case).

[4] In the multiple regression analysis, the equations of the two regression lines were calculated by using the b values in the following manner: for advanced-level students: y = (43.30 − 29.79) + (.38 + .92)x = 13.51 + 1.30x; for intermediate- and elementary-level students: y = 43.30 + .38x. All the b values were rounded off to two digits after the decimal point. The asterisks with r

values indicate levels of significance: *.05, **.01, ***.001.

[5] The equations of the two regression lines were calculated by using the *b* values in the following manner: for students who had spent time in Japan: y = (45.29 − 24.47) + (.40 + .54)x = 20.82 + .94x; for students who had spent no time in Japan: y = 45.29 + .40x. All the *b* values were rounded off to two digits after the decimal point.

[6] It is strongly suspected that University B elementary-level students had not yet been taught most of the basic tasks that were asked about in the scale, although the elementary-level students at University A had learned them. Instruction time at the elementary level at University B was much shorter (5 classroom hours per week) than that at University A (8 classroom hours per week). Moreover, such items as the days of the week, dates, and asking directions were introduced relatively later in the textbook used by University B than in the textbook used by University A. The author overlooked the possible impact of these differences in instruction time and textbooks on the scores on the SR–CDS. In future studies that use this type of self-rating for early stage elementary-level students, researchers should carefully examine the textbooks and material taught and add to the scale more questions about the tasks that the participants have already studied in class.

[7] The equations of the two regression lines were calculated by using the *b* values in the following manner: for female students: y = (73.10 − 19.85) + (−.59 + .80)x = 53.25 + .21x; for male students: y = 73.10 − .59x. All the *b* values were rounded off to two digits after the decimal point.

[8] When the students at University B at the elementary level (who scored consistently low on the SR–CDS) were eliminated from the sample, the result was still the same, that is, there was a significant negative relationship for male students ($r = -.447**$; $p = .000$; $n = 95$) and no significant relationship for female students ($r = -.188$; $p = .127$; $n = 67$). It should also be added that the same gender difference had been found in the author's pilot study conducted in the previous academic year using 50 second-semester students. Those 50 students did not show any problem in the SR–CDS distribution.

[9] The elimination of the SR–CDS was predictable because of the nonsignificant correlation to Japanese class anxiety that had been found with regard to research question 2. The negligible improvement on the prediction by the other self-rating—the SR-EPJ—needs more explanation of its cause. It was because the SR–EPJ was strongly correlated with the SR–CL ($r = .657**$; $p = .000$; $n = 212$) and, thus, did not have a chance to improve upon the prediction made by the FNE and the SR–CL. The SR–EPJ was not correlated with the FNE ($r = .041$; $p = .553$; $n = 211$).

[10] According to the survey administered to the teachers in this study, peer correction in speaking was often used, especially at the elementary and intermediate levels. Teachers' responses about their correction of students' spoken Japanese varied from *sometimes* to *most of the time*, and there was no clear difference in the frequency of correction between the two universities and among the different instructional levels. Regrettably, the frequency of praise or positive rewards was not a question in the teachers' survey.

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APPENDIX A
Survey Questions

Questions 1–14 [Background questionnaire]
1. University
2. The current semester of Japanese course
3–4. The current course/section number
5. Gender
6–7. Age
8. Year in school
9. Native language
10. Do (or did) you use Japanese to talk with one or both of your parents?
11. Had you studied Japanese in school before you entered college?
12. How long did you study Japanese before you entered the current semester?
13. The total length of staying in Japan
14. The grade you received in your last Japanese course

Questions 15–26 [Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)]: 1 Not at all characteristic of me; 2 Slightly characteristic of me; 3 Somewhat characteristic of me; 4 Very much characteristic of me; 5 Extremely characteristic of me

15. I worry about what people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference.
16. I am unconcerned even if I know people are forming an unfavorable impression of me.
17. I am frequently afraid of other people noting my shortcomings.
18. I rarely worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone.
19. I am afraid that others will not approve of me.
20. I am afraid that people will find fault with me.
21. Other people's opinions of me do not bother me.
22. When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me.
23. I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make.
24. If I know someone is judging me, it has little effect on me.
25. Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me.
26. I often worry that I will say or do the wrong things.

Questions 27–47 [Japanese Class Anxiety Scale (JCAS)]: 1 Strongly disagree; 2 Disagree; 3 Neutral/I can't say; 4 Agree; 5 Strongly agree

27. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my Japanese class.
28. I don't worry about making mistakes in Japanese class.
29. I get nervous when I know that I'm going to be called on in Japanese class.
30. I get nervous when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in Japanese.
31. I keep thinking that the other students are better at foreign languages than I am.
32. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in Japanese class.
33. In Japanese class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
34. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my Japanese class.
35. I get nervous when I don't understand what my Japanese teacher is correcting.
36. Even if I am well prepared for Japanese class, I feel anxious about it.
37. I often feel like not going to my Japanese class.
38. I feel confident when I speak in Japanese class.
39. I am afraid that my Japanese teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
40. I always feel that the other students speak Japanese better than I do.
41. I feel very self-conscious about speaking Japanese in front of other students.
42. I feel more tense and nervous in my Japanese class than in my other classes.
43. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
44. When I'm on my way to Japanese class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
45. I get nervous when I don't understand every word my Japanese teacher says.
46. I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules you have to learn to speak Japanese.
47. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak Japanese.

Questions 48–62 [Self-Rating Can-Do Scale (SR–CDS)]: 1 With great difficulty or not at all; 2 With some difficulty; 3 Quite easily

48. I can say the days of the week in Japanese:
49. I can give the current date (month, day, year) in Japanese:
50. I can order a simple meal in a restaurant in Japanese:
51. I can ask for directions on the street in Japanese:
52. I can buy clothes in a department store in Japanese:
53. I can introduce myself in social situations, and use appropriate greetings and leave-taking expressions in Japanese:
54. I can talk about my favorite hobby at some length in Japanese:
55. I can describe my present job, studies, or other major life activities in Japanese:
56. I can explain what I did last weekend at some length in Japanese:
57. I can explain what I plan to be doing 5 years from now at some length in Japanese:
58. I can sustain everyday conversation in very polite style Japanese with a person much older than I am:
59. I can sustain everyday conversation in casual style Japanese with my Japanese friend:
60. I can describe the educational system of my own country in some detail in Japanese:
61. I can state and support with reasons my position on a controversial topic (for example, cigarette smoking) in Japanese:
62. I can describe in Japanese the role played by Japanese business corporations in the world market:

Questions 63–66 [Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study (SR–CL)]: 1 Poor; 2 Relatively poor; 3 Fairly good; 4 Good; 5 Very good

63. For my current level of study in Japanese, I think my Japanese pronunciation is:
64. For my current level of study in Japanese, I think my Japanese fluency is:
65. For my current level of study in Japanese, I think my grammatical accuracy in spoken Japanese is:
66. For my current level of study in Japanese, I think my overall speaking ability in Japanese is:

Questions 67–70 [Self-Rating Expected Perception by Japanese (SR–EPJ)]: 1 Poor; 2 Relatively poor; 3 Fairly good; 4 Good; 5 Very good

67. If I were to go to Japan, I think my pronunciation would be perceived by the Japanese as:
68. If I were to go to Japan, I think my Japanese fluency would be perceived by the Japanese as:
69. If I were to go to Japan, I think my grammatical accuracy in spoken Japanese would be perceived by the Japanese as:
70. If I were to go to Japan, I think my overall speaking ability in Japanese would be perceived by the Japanese as:

APPENDIX B
Descriptive Statistics for Major Variables

Variables	*N*	Mean	*SD*	Actual Range (Possible Range)
JCAS	212	57.09	15.99	26–105 (21–105)
FNE	211	34.42	8.94	12–59 (15–75)
SR–CDS	212	30.04	6.98	16–45 (15–45)
SR–CL	212	12.26	3.47	4–20 (4–20)
SR–EPJ	212	9.95	3.47	4–19 (4–20)

Note. JCAS = Japanese Class Anxiety Scale; FNE = Fear of Negative Evaluation; SR–CDS = Self-Rating Can-Do Scale; SR–CL = Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study; SR–EPJ = Self-Rating Expected Perception by the Japanese.

Correlations among Major Variables

	JCAS	FNE	SR–CDS	SR–CL
FNE	.316**			
SR–CDS	−.106	.043		
SR–CL	−.509**	−.070	.232**	
SR–EPJ	−.389**	.041	.485**	.657**

Note. JCAS = Japanese Class Anxiety Scale; FNE = Fear of Negative Evaluation; SR–CDS = Self-Rating Can-Do Scale; SR–CL = Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study; SR–EPJ = Self-Rating Expected Perception by the Japanese.
** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX C
Difference between the Regression Lines of Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation for Advanced-Level Students and for Intermediate- and Elementary-Level Students

Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Japanese Class Anxiety

Independent Variables	b	beta	t	Significance of t
FNE	.381	.212	2.957	.003*
LEVEL	−29.787	−.832	−2.850	.005*
FNE × LEVEL	.916	.930	3.150	.002*
(constant)	43.293		9.513	.000*
				R square: .145

Note. FNE = Scores on the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale; LEVEL = 1 point for advanced-level students and 0 points for intermediate- and elementary-level students.

APPENDIX D
Difference between the Regression Lines of Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation for Students Who Spent Time in Japan and for Students Who Spent No Time in Japan

Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Japanese Class Anxiety

Independent Variables	b	beta	t	Significance of t
FNE	.395	.221	2.776	.006*
LEVEL	−24.469	−.732	−2.798	.006*
FNE × LEVEL	.542	.598	2.225	.027*
(constant)	45.294		9.067	.000*
				R square: .146

Note. FNE = Scores on the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale; LEVEL = 1 point for students who had spent time in Japan and 0 points for students who had spent no time in Japan.

APPENDIX E
Difference between the Regression Lines of Anxiety and Self-Rating Can-Do Scale for Male and for Female Students

Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Japanese Class Anxiety

Independent Variables	b	beta	t	Significance of t
SR–CDS	−.594	−.259	−2.887	.004*
GENDER	−19.849	−.616	−2.075	.039*
SR–CDS × GENDER	.805	.784	2.595	.010*
(constant)	73.100		11.506	.000*
				R square: .060

Note. SR–CDS = Scores on Self-Rating Can-Do Scale; GENDER= 1 point for female Students and 0 points for male students.

APPENDIX F
Determination of the Model for Predicting Anxiety

Multiple Regression Analysis (Backward Elimination Procedure)

Dependent Variable: Japanese Class Anxiety

Predictors Entered	b	beta	t	Significance of t
FNE	.527	.294	5.194	.000*
SR–CDS	.125	.054	.841	.401
SR–CL	−1.786	−.388	−5.126	.000*
SR–EPJ	−.797	−.173	−2.064	.040*
(constant)	65.019		10.988	.000*
				R square: .352
[SR–CDS removed from the equation.]				
FNE	.528	.294	5.206	.000*
SR–CL	−1.824	−.396	−5.284	.000*
SR–EPJ	−.651	−.141	−1.889	.060
(constant)	67.747		13.699	.000*
				R square: .340
[SR–EPJ removed from the equation.]				
FNE	.506	.282	4.991	.000*
SR–CL	−2.255	−.490	−8.664	.000*
(constant)	67.323		13.544	.000*
				R square: .339
[FNE removed from the equation.]				
SR–CL	−2.342	−.509	−8.567	.000*
(constant)	85.820		24.630	.000*
				R square: .259

Note. FNE = Fear of Negative Evaluation; SR–CDS = Self-Rating Can-Do Scale; SR–CL = Self-Rating for the Current Level of Study; SR–EPJ = Self-Rating Expected Perception by the Japanese.

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