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Escaping the Gender Box: An Empirical Study of Anxiety Experienced by English as a Second Language Learners

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ESCAPING THE GENDER BOX:
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF ANXIETY EXPERIENCED BY ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A Thesis
Presented to
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Master of Arts

By
Alexandra Fay Knapp

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Escaping the Gender Box: An Empirical Study of Anxiety Experienced

By English as a Second Language Learners

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ESCAPING THE GENDER BOX:
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF ANXIETY EXPERIENCED BY ENGLISH AS A
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract

Studies have shown that, in general, anxiety in second-language learners
debilitates their language acquisition capabilities and ultimate second language (L2)
achievement. Such studies have also shown that gender has much to do with the
strategies used to cope with feelings of stress and anxiety. Anxiety specifically impedes
classroom achievement due to its interference with the production and retention of a new
language. In other words, anxious students have been shown to learn less and have been
often unable to demonstrate what they have learned, especially in front of large crowds.
When anxiety impairs cognitive function, it likewise causes students to feel as if they are
failures, resulting in decreased self-image. Research indicates that males and females
experience different emotions when studying a foreign language and prefer different
learning strategies to cope with stress and anxiety. The current study surveyed 102
English as a second language (ESL) students (45 females and 57 males) using the Foreign
Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) in order
to better understand how and why males and females experience anxiety in different
learning situations. The results demonstrate that females generally experience more
anxiety in the ESL classroom than males; they worry more about the consequences of
poor performance. Instructional implications for the findings are discussed.
An Introduction to Perspectives in ESL/EFL Learning, Anxiety, and Gender

In recent years, the issue of anxiety in second language learners frequently has been recognized as problematic. Studies have been conducted as to what causes anxiety, the specific differences in anxiety felt by males and females, and the ways in which anxiety can be reduced. Although some educators may view anxiety in students as a helpful adrenaline energizer, it is nothing if not debilitating for the student when it negatively affects their work. Although there are several ways to define the pervasiveness of anxiety, relaying it as “a feeling of uneasy suspense” (Rachman, 1998) is one of the most common ways to describe the prominent emotion felt by students. In today’s second language (L2) teaching context, English as a Second Language(ESL)/English as a Foreign Language(EFL) teachers are facing one of the greatest challenges yet: to provide their students with a comfortable, open-minded, low-anxiety environment to learn and practice their second language. An environment conducive to learning is especially important in that the community of L2 learners is continually increasing. Although the curricular structure of American universities may remain relatively the same over the years, one thing is changing: the students who walk through the doors. Projections show that the number of learners of English as a second language in 2000 from Miami to Anchorage was around 3.5 million, and by 2020, that number will have almost doubled to 6 million (Coulter & Smith, 2006). Likewise, a report from the National Center for Education Statistics (2003) showed that around four million students nationwide could be classified as English as a second language learners, a 30 percent increase from a decade ago (Dong, 2004). Considering this dramatic increase, finding ways to provide second
language learners with the best education possible is imperative.

These numbers measure the quantity of L2 students in high schools; in postsecondary educational institutions, minority students account for almost 23% of the student body, many of whom do not speak English as their first language. Their enrollment, which is continually growing, is representative of the dramatic increase in the number of students enrolled in universities (O’Brien & Zudack, 1998).

Researchers that examine the behavior of L2 students are aware that anxiety and ultimate fluency are often correlated and opine that anxiety is a major obstacle to overcome by both L2 students and teachers are palpable (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Daly (1991) suggests that some students avoid communicating in the second language because they are unprepared, uninterested, or simply unwilling to express themselves, but that most anxiety will occur because of the learners’ feelings of alienation in class, lack of confidence, or a fear of communication itself. Although some anxiety can be facilitating because it motivates students to continue working in stressful situations, anxiety can be quite hindering, too. According to Horwitz et al., when students are learning and using a second language, they are challenging their own self-concepts on how well they are communicating, “lead[ing] to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic” (1986, p.128). Considering this statement, anxiety in second-language learners will certainly affect their studies and ability to learn a new language in that it will consistently impede classroom achievement. Anxiety interferes with the production, retention, and acquisition of a new language and poses specific problems, as, for
example, Worde (2003) demonstrates in emphasizing a direct correlation among anxiety, task difficulty, and second language ability. Worde (2003) also notes that anxious students have been shown to learn less and are often unable to demonstrate what they have actually retained. As anxiety impairs cognitive function, students experience more failure, which only produces more anxiety with the vicious cycle continuing. Serious language anxiety may cause students to feel as if they are failures, causing other related problems such as lowered self-esteem and self-confidence, lowered ability to take risks in language studies, and a definite decreased proficiency of the second language. The phrase “language proficiency,” according to Toppelberg and Shapiro (2000), refers to a student’s competence in several domains, such as vocabulary retention and verbal analogies, and multiple modalities (e.g., expressive, receptive). When multiplying these linguistic competences in L2 environments, students will inevitably find themselves facing a wide range of emotional and behavioral adaptations (Toppelberg, Medrano, Pena Morgens, & Neito-Castanon, 2002; Toppelberg et al., 2006). When they are unable to cope with these adaptations, the result may lead to several potential problems, one being a student’s expulsion from school, which could ultimately result in loss of job opportunities and shame brought to that student’s family.

To better understand the types of language anxiety experienced by university L2 students, Kota Ohata (2005), author of “Potential Sources of Anxiety for Japanese Learners of English: Preliminary Case Interviews with Five Japanese College Students in the U.S.” conducted an exploratory study. Her purpose was to investigate the nature of anxiety felt by five ESL students from Japanese backgrounds by paying particular
attention to their accounts of anxiety and other emotional difficulties they faced during their time spent at an American university. The participants included three undergraduate students majoring in Computer Science, Journalism, and Art. The other two were graduate students studying Adult Communication and English. The participants had all studied English for at least 8 years, and the age differences ranged from 20 to 36 years old. The five students responded in their oral interviews that there were several types of potential anxiety sources, such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of self-confidence when writing or speaking in English, competitiveness between peers, test anxiety, and fixed beliefs concerning ways in which optimal learning can be reached.

First, according to Ohata (2005), some critical issues that may trigger anxiety in students include: those of a socio-psychological nature, instructor and learner beliefs on the practices of teaching and learning, and interactions between the instructor and learner. In the area of social and psychological components of language anxiety, personal and interpersonal issues are the most common sources of anxiety known to researchers thus far. Such issues involve self-esteem, competitiveness between students, group identity, and social discourse. There seems to be natural competitiveness in relation to L2 learning, and students may feel stress and anxiety when one or more students are performing better or are acquiring the new language. Decreased performance may cause students to feel as if they are not as proficient as their peers, causing them to feel as if they should not speak up in class or attempt to engage in L2 conversation with other students while talking in the second language. According to Ohata (2005), this is called “social anxiety,” and unfortunately, it is experienced by many. Having a varied
vocabulary in the second language and being able to understand the second language easily are both crucial in students’ seeing themselves as competent communicators. Student and teacher beliefs about proper ways to learn and teach these skills may also differ, increasing stress levels in the classroom. Because students often have unrealistic conceptions about their language learning experience, they may have debilitating feelings of incompetence. Ohata (2005) notes that a similar study by Horwitz (1988) indicated that some students showed concern about the correctness of their speech in comparison to native-like pronunciation, believing they could achieve native-like fluency after only two years of studying a language. Other students believed that language learning is merely translation of words, and others decided that success in L2 learning only happens to the few students that are “gifted for language learning” (p.7). Considering such flawed and unreasonable assumptions, we can clearly see why students’ success may be limited by their thinking.

Second, fear of negative evaluation seems to have the most significant impact on the students’ increase in anxiety. Ohata (2005) mentions that many said that they would avoid eye contact with the teacher, because students feared that they would be called on to speak in front of others and would embarrass themselves. Two of the students said they often felt their hearts pounding and their palms sweating when there were called on. Likewise, class presentations often caused severe psychological stress. In fact, one student noted that standing in front of the classroom made her severely self-conscious about the facial expressions of her peers so that she began to blush, felt panicky, and even forgot the things she had planned to say.
Further results from Ohata’s (2005) study indicated that when students are afraid of the evaluation they will receive from their instructor or peers, they show their lack of self-confidence both in the proficiency of their English skills and in the subject matter taught in the classroom. Anxiety as a result of confidence deficiencies proved to be abundant in these students. One student, cited in Ohata’s (2005) study said, “If I could speak and write in the same way as Japanese, I wouldn’t feel so nervous when asked to clarify my points in class. Even if I am quite familiar with the topic in my class discussion, I somehow tend to hesitate to comment on that, and after class I feel so bad about myself” (p. 10).

Depending on the context, a few of the students agreed that competitiveness could lead to anxiety. When comparing themselves to native speakers of English, it is not uncommon for the L2 students to feel as if they are falling short. One student even said that he never spoke English with his Japanese peers because it felt as if they were taking part in some sort of language competition. He explained that even though he sometimes wanted to participate, he was afraid that other Japanese students would be evaluating them at the same time, leading him to long for a time when he would be the only Japanese student in the classroom. Another student interviewed by Ohata (2005) provided a very realistic account of the competition she felt among her Japanese peers:

“Three of us, Mikiko, Yumi, and I were just chatting in front of the library after class when my American classmate joined our conversation. The moment we switched our language from Japanese into English, I sensed myself being so alert to my English for fear of making mistakes in front of my friends. Maybe I’m just
too self-conscious of others’ evaluative eyes, but sometimes I cannot help it. I
don’t usually find myself so competitive in Japanese but somehow in second
language I am, though no one may know it but myself! I just don’t want myself to
feel inferior to others, especially when those others aren’t the same Japanese as I
am.” (p. 11)

Test anxiety is a common emotion felt by students who are studying even their
native language, so we can imagine the anxiety accompanying students studying in the
L2. According to Ohata (2005), of the five L2 students interviewed, most said that they
feared taking tests in their second language. They mentioned that not only were they
afraid of the consequences of receiving a bad grade, but also that they felt the decrease in
self-confidence that often accompanies a low score. Likewise, when taking essay exams,
the students commented that they often felt pressed for time. They were worried about
organizing their ideas in an intelligent and coherent way, and they also had to worry
about grammar errors. As Horwitz et al. notes (1986), students may understand a certain
grammar point, but will forget it during testing. The student may realize that he or she
knew the correct answer but recorded the wrong one, which causes their anxiety to
escalate, even after the test has been completed. Test anxiety, in fact, has been the most
commonly researched type of anxiety. All students operate and perform differently in
testing situations, but the accompanying anxiety has shown to debilitate. In the early
1970’s, Charles D. Spielberger constructed two scales used to measure different forms of
anxiety: state anxiety, which can fluctuate over time, and a stable, fixed anxiety, called
situation and trait anxiety. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) measured both
types of anxiety in students, and the other, the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI), measured anxiety felt by students only during testing situations. Findings using these two scales have shown that all anxiety has a profound effect on students’ second language acquisition (Hao, Meihua, & Ruoping, 2004). Horwitz et al. (1986) note that students who show signs of having high levels of anxiety in the classroom are afraid to speak in the second language and feel great self-consciousness when doing so in front of others. Thus, their learning is impeded.

In addition, many students have fixed beliefs or behavioral patterns that have been shaped by their cultural background, making it difficult to adapt to American patterns of behavior. For example, one student in Ohata’s (2005) study noted that she was so used to acting reserved in Japan that it was hard to become assertive in America even though she knew she should be. We know that any person who studies another language, especially in another country, must acculturate as much and as quickly as they can. This change in habits is difficult and when attempts to adapt to a new environment fail, it can be frustrating to the student. Yeh and Drost (2002) remark, “Students who are not from the dominant culture may be victims to unspoken yet powerful stereotypes and messages about their development and personal identity. Hence, they must learn to negotiate and bridge multiple, and often competing, identities into the schools” (cited in Min-Hua, 2006, p. 3).

Some learners are genetically predisposed to be anxious individuals. But for the most part, anxiety is generally experienced as the result of a certain stimuli or situation. Horwitz et al. (1986) recognize three general, componential sources of language anxiety.
experienced by students: 1) communication apprehension, 2) test anxiety, and 3) fear of negative evaluation. Anxiety spawned by communication apprehension usually occurs when the students are engaging in conversation with another, and fear that they do not understand fully what is being said or that they, too, cannot be understood. When students have unrealistic expectations, anger or frustration may erupt as a result of their performance, especially on language tests. Horwitz et al. note that foreign language anxiety is not merely a combination of these fears transferred to L2 learning, but rather a complex system of beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and self-perceptions related to the unique process of learning a second language. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was utilized by Horwitz et al. to identify foreign language anxiety, based on analysis of the three potential sources of anxiety listed above. The FLCAS is a 33-item, self-reflective measure, whereby students score their feelings or reactions on a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. I chose this scale in my own research because it seemed to capture situations in which students may feel an array of emotions, from extreme nervousness or anxiousness to completely calm, depending on the particular student, thus providing a standard measure. Before taking the survey, students were asked to fill out a brief learner profile supplying their native language, the years they have spent studying English, their age, and their sex. When I first began this study, my sole purpose was to explore the nature of anxiety felt by L2 students. Then I noticed a pattern in the surveys. It seemed quite clear that females generally experienced higher levels of anxiety in the L2 context, they dreaded attending language class more
than males, and they worried more about the consequences of performing poorly.

As Rebecca Oxford (1993) suggests in her article, “Instructional Implications of Gender Differences in Second/Foreign Language (L2) Learning Styles and Strategies,” gender differences exist in styles and strategies for foreign and L2 learning, explaining why some students may experience different levels of anxiety. According to a review of hundreds of social development reports, the learning styles and strategies between males and females are quite different. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) noted:

- Females show greater interest than males in social activities;
- Females prefer “gentle” interaction more than aggressive interaction (with aggression defined as the intent to harm others), and the opposite is true of males;
- Females are more cooperative and less competitive than males.

(cited in Oxford. 1993, p. 66)

Even in this brief analysis, it is important to assess the learning styles of foreign language learners and account for these differences in the classroom. By adjusting to preferred learning styles teachers help reduce feelings of anxiousness in the classroom. Understanding how students learn can make quite the difference. When students feel comfortable openly discussing their learning strategies that have helped mold their learning style preferences, it may help them understand “style contrasts” with their opposite-sex peers. Teachers should also emphasize that students of the opposite sex and with different style preferences can actually learn from each other. Although why men and women learn differently cannot be entirely explained, cognitive development has much to do with gender. Developmental differences in verbal skills apply, as girls usually
begin to speak before boys. An initial “rate advantage,” results; as girls grow up, they will often speak in longer, more complex sentences than boys. Perhaps this advantage explains why girls score higher on tests of spelling, perceptual speed, and grammar. In L2 learning, females are generally better listeners. In a sample of 800 university students, Farhardy (1982) for example, found that, in the area of listening comprehension, females surpassed males (Oxford, 1993). Males do not lag behind in several other areas, however. Meta-analyses indicate that males will outperform females in tests of mental object rotation beginning in adolescence. It is typically understood that males will score better on tests of map reading, mechanical reasoning, depth perception, and vertical-horizontal perception (Hyde & Linn, 1986; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Weiner & Robinson, 1986). In mathematical tasks involving abstract concepts of relationships, space, and theory, males will also commonly outperform females. When Gass and Varnis (1986) studied conversations between males and females, they found that men usually dominated the conversation, while women made obvious attempts to initiate more negotiations of meaning and tried to communicate more clearly (Oxford, 1993). Although many scholars cover subject areas outside of language and grammar usage alone, it is evident that there are several differences in learning styles of males and females, and preferences in studying certain subjects do, indeed, exist. It is important to examine the ways in which females manifest more anxiety than males and ways in which this anxiety can be reduced. Because women experience more anxiety and nervousness than the opposite sex when studying a foreign language, is it possible that women could gradually diminish from the number of students who are developing in their acquisition of a second language? Is it
possible to promote learning in both sexes by developing teaching strategies that address both strengths and weaknesses of the sexes? Questions like these need attention. Gender differences in L2 learning have not been observed much; in fact, research on the topic has only been widely developed within the past decade and a half (Oxford, 1993). The importance of studying anxiety in students is to see if such differences do exist is pertinent when trying to avoid a potentially large gender gap in L2 achievement and long-term educational achievement. Some researchers, such as Baumeister (1988), suggest that gender differences should be ignored, because they enable the continuing unequal treatment of men and women. I must disagree. The possibility of female enrollment in American universities declining gives meaning to my study so that we may better understand anxiety level differences between males and females and devise ways in which anxiety can be reduced in the classroom.

In the next chapter, I will explain the reasons that motivation and self-efficacy cannot be ignored when discussing anxiety in L2 students, and that men and women differ in their language learning preferences. Both potentially cause higher anxiety in female students than in men.
Anxious L2 students, Burden (2005) suggests, are likely to express concern about the impressions they are making on others. When these students are presented with uncomfortable learning situations, it is not unlikely that they withdraw from both the activity and their peers. When anxiety levels are high enough, learners may begin to doubt their capability to perform in English. This doubt can ultimately lead to decreased efforts in the classroom and an avoidance of circumstances where they may be able to enhance their communication skills. Likewise, as Aida (1994) notes, language teachers have become concerned with the risk that students with anxiety may not be able to achieve their ultimate proficiency in the L2 because the stressor acts as an “affective filter” that prevents students from doing so. Anxious students, according to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), find learning a second language to be uncomfortable. They are thus likely to avoid participation in the classroom and may also feel more pressure than the other students to avoid making mistakes.

Many studies (Abu-Rabia, 2004; Ehrman, 1996; Hao et al., 2004; Ohata, 2005; & Pappamihiel, 2001) have shown the negative effects of anxiety on L2 learning. Burden (2005) specifically surveyed 289 first-year university students (231 males and 58 females) studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Japan using Horwitz, Horwtiz, and Cope’s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. Burden also included an open-ended question at the end of the survey prompting students to share an experience in the learning environment in which they may have felt anxiety. The responses “Strongly
Agree” and “Agree” were combined, as well as “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” to
create overall scores of agreement or disagreement. With speaking anxiety, over half of
the students (59.1%) responded that they did not feel sure of themselves when they speak
in English. Likewise, 51.2% stated that they do panic when called upon to speak without
previous preparation to do so. Fifty-three percent of students also responded that they felt
overwhelmed by the number of rules they think are necessary in understanding and
speaking English. When examining classroom anxiety, Burden found that a perceived
lack of confidence had an impact on anxiety felt by students. For instance, 52.6% of
students reported having feelings of fright when they did not understand what the teacher
says in English, 38.7 % noted feeling nervous when they do not understand everything
that the teacher was saying in English, and 42.9% of respondents said that they became
upset when they did not understand the teacher’s corrections.

In the open-response section of the surveys, where students were asked to provide
an account of a time when they experienced anxiety, many students noted that they felt
threatened when asked to respond to questions from teachers, especially when they were
“suddenly” called upon. Some students commented that they felt as if they had “limited
ability” when speaking in English, causing them to feel helpless. Failing to recall
vocabulary words previously studied was also frequently cited as a specific time when
students felt especially anxious. One student commented, “... when I thought I knew a
word from the last lesson and was called upon to answer, I was dumbfounded, soon
forgot, and couldn’t answer” (Burden, 2005, p. 13). Students frequently commented that
they often compared themselves with their peers, and when they felt as if another student
was performing better, their anxiety levels would increase. This was evidenced by remarks, such as “everyone else seems to understand, except me,” and “when I don’t understand, but other students manage to answer simply” (Burden, 2005, p.13). Another student responded that he felt anxiety when he was unable to respond to a simple question that he knew the answer to, but just could not recall it. These statements, Burden (2005) tells us, are linked with self-esteem because students commonly blame themselves for their low levels of language retention.

A limited L2 vocabulary in which to express ideas can increase anxiety and lead to feelings of frustration and apprehension, even when students have mature thoughts and ideas (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1991). In addition, Burden (2005) notes that students may have a difficult time retrieving information in the L2, leading to decreased acquisition. When students experience anxiety and become withdrawn, it only makes them less socially oriented and ultimately less assertive. Scholars have reported that second/foreign language anxiety has been correlated to confidence and self-esteem, as well as attitude and motivation levels, and is often seen as debilitating for students (Hilleson, 1996; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

Motivation and Self-Efficacy

Although there are many studies concerning the ways anxiety may affect language acquisition (Aida, 1994; Ariza, 2002; Burden, 2005; Daly, 1991; Hilleson, 1996; Hsieh, 2006; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Pappamihiel, 2001; Pruitt, 1978; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Yeh & Drost, 2002), Ehrman (1996) suggests in her book *Understanding Foreign Language Difficulties* that anxiety is not the only emotion that
should be considered when studying the progress of students. Ehrman uses a theoretical framework of attitudes experienced by students in their educational environment, and in this framework, along with anxiety, she includes motivation and self-efficacy. Ehrman tells us that “Motivation is described as the perceived ‘payoff’ for the student’s investment of time, energy, and effort. It has to do with why the student is there in the first place and what keeps him or her working” (p. 137). Even when the challenge becomes laborious, motivation can lead a student to reach his or her goals.

Ehrman further emphasizes that there are essentially two types of motivation—*intrinsic*, when something is done for personal satisfaction,—and *extrinsic*, when learning is driven for some other benefit, such as higher pay or increased career opportunities. If a student finds interest in the language and the culture he or she is studying, enjoys the challenge, and wishes to continue his or her language studies, the motivation is intrinsic. When a student is taking a language class simply because it is a requirement in his or her studies, the motivation is extrinsic. Ehrman (1996) suggests that it is important for students to draw from both kinds of motivation. *Intrinsic* motivation is a powerful tool and allows for students to become driven toward the idea of deepening their knowledge. Students with strong extrinsic motivation are probably determined to jump every hurdle needed to achieve success. As Ellis (2004) reports, there is evidence that supports the claim that the outcome of second-language learners is strongly connected to levels of *intrinsic* motivation. Ehrman (1996) notes that students may correlate educational energy with elements of interest to them. They may use personal resources to allocate tasks and increase their motivation. She also mentions, however, that shame and guilt may
“represent internal processes and thus generate a kind of intrinsic motivation…”

(Ehrman, 1996, p.139). Ehrman continues to note that shame and guilt, unfortunately, arouse anxiety that interferes with learning.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is activated based on a student’s successes and failures, as one might expect. If students are performing well, they are likely to be motivated to continue to perform in that manner. Likewise, when students fail, their anxiety levels increase, and their motivation may decrease. How students view themselves and the self-expressions of those learners, as Tobias (1979) notes, are interwoven, and foreign/second language anxiety is directly related to both (cited in Abu-Rabia, 2004). L2 students with stronger learning motivation can be expected to interact more with other students, resulting in increased communication in the second language (Yashima, 2002). Students with greater second/foreign language learning motivation will usually receive higher grades and will achieve proficiency in the target language more quickly and accurately (Baker, 1992; Gardner, 1985; McGroarty, 1996; Oxford, 1996; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Samimy & Tabuse, 1992; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Spolsky, 1989; Warschauer, 1996; Rueda & Chen, 2005).

Motivation theories about second language learning, such as the social-educational model, the process-oriented model, and the self-determination theory, have been presented over the years. The social-educational model (Gardner, 1985; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), which is used to distinguish types of motivation, relates motivation to individual differences in learning contexts, attitudes toward language learning, self-efficacy, and anxiety. The process oriented model of Dörnyei (1994, 1998, 2001)
suggests that motivation in foreign language students is accompanied with the need for achievement and self-confidence in the student and is directly correlated with language anxiety. The self-determination theory is based on the idea that there are essentially three types of motivation: extrinsic motivations and intrinsic motivations, and amotivation (the idea that a student has little to no motivation) (Hao, et al., 2004). These models and studies have shown that integrative motivation develops as a result of students’ desire to acquire a new language and become part of that new speech community. Integrative motivation is closely related to persistence, attrition, and retention of another language (Gardner, Moorcroft, & Metford, 1989). Intrinsic motivation, Ramage (1990) points out, is crucial to achievement in learning a second language (Hao et al., 2004). Motivation to achieve develops as a result of a strong desire to succeed. It has a positive correlation to risk-taking and persistence, but not to test anxiety (Atkinson & Litwin, 1966; Litwin, 1966). Elliot and McGregor (1999) assert that students who are not focused on learning are more likely to experience anxiety and avoid assessment of their abilities (Hao et al., 2004).

Ehrman (1996) explains self-efficacy as “the degree to which the student thinks he or she has the capacity to cope with the learning challenge.” She continues by commenting,

A learner can experience a sense of self-efficacy in one domain (e.g., physics or language learning) but not in others (e.g., social interaction with strangers), though often a sense of effectiveness in one or more areas of skills can overflow into how one feels about him- or herself in general, too. (Ehrman, 1996, p. 137)
A student’s self-efficacy has much to do with his or her levels of motivation and anxiety. A student with strong self-efficacy is more likely to take educational risks and expect positive results that lead to an increase in motivation and a decrease in anxiety. As Ehrman (1996) suggests, students who consider themselves poor or slow learners are less likely to attempt to expand their language knowledge by applying it in the outside world. At school, they are in a protected environment and, poor or slow learners “are likely to want to learn in settings that reduce risk by reducing options and imposing external structure” (Ehrman, 1996, p. 144). Low self-efficacy may cause students to be dependent learners. Ehrman provides an example of Corwin, an ESL student who has a lot of difficulty with remembering vocabulary and rules of grammar. Although Corwin is not a fast learner, he comes to believe that he is performing worse than he actually is. When his teacher provides a solid learning structure for him and guides him step-by-step in his assignments, Corwin expresses satisfaction. Allowing students like Corwin to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy is difficult for instructors. Corwin seems to have “convinced himself that he can never stand without a cane...”; instead he should recognize “with practice and mastery he can do without the prop until the next new thing comes along” (Ehrman, 1996, p. 146). By providing Corwin with study aids, helping him to understand which elements of study are priorities, and evaluating his learning as much as possible, teachers may increase his interest in the subject, leading to an increase in self-efficacy. Ehrman (1996) emphasizes that a strong sense of self-efficacy is correlated to self-esteem. When students have low self-esteem, their self-efficacy is lowered. Students with low self-esteem, then, may experience more anxiety in the classroom than a student with
higher esteem and a higher level of self-efficacy. Providing students with realistic conversational situations is problematic because the pressure to convey information increases with a decrease in scripted practice. Therefore, a student’s “self-esteem is vulnerable to the awareness that the range of communicative choices and authenticity is restricted” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Students’ potential can be hindered by anxiety and directly relates to reductions in self-esteem and risk taking (Burden, 2005).

Li’s 2006 study of motivation in students from Mainland China who are studying in the United Kingdom (their first time in an English-speaking country) shows us the importance of high self-efficacy. Over the course of a year, data about their motivation and goals were collected from the students using semi-structured interviews. A consistent theme ran through the data: difficulties perceived by the respondents lowered their concepts of self-confidence when they spoke English. The students commented that they experienced great difficulties both speaking and understanding English, with a greater emphasis placed on the former. One student, called Sun, experienced feelings of inadequacy when expressing herself using English. Believing that she lacked phonological competence and useful vocabulary, Sun often became embarrassed when speaking. She also needed native English speakers to talk slowly and clearly. These difficulties led to decreased self-confidence causing her to be inhibited when speaking English. Another student, Qian, relayed similar experiences, noting that he often felt “overwhelmed” when speaking English. When at work, Qian mentioned that oral communication between him and co-workers proved unsuccessful. He often had to use visual aids to send messages, he said. These situations led to low efficiency at work. In
informal social situations, he also felt shy and hesitant to communicate because he worried about how well he would be understood. It is easy to see how in situations like these, a student’s self-efficacy and motivation may decrease, and anxiety levels may climb.

The influence of affective variables in L2 acquisition are also examined in Yashima’s (2002) study of a student’s Willingness to Communicate (WTC). The WTC model was created to reflect the negative implications that introversion, reticence, and anxiety may have on a student’s willingness to communicate with others. MacIntyre and Charos (1996) developed a model (the Model of L2 WTC) that showed that a student’s desire to talk has much to do with his or her perceived competence in communicating in a second language. It also reflected his or her communication anxiety. Using the L2 WTC model as a basis for study, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) had 377 Japanese university students take part in a questionnaire to measure their communication tendencies. Students were questioned concerning areas such as their intercultural friendship orientation, motivational intensity, desire to learn English, interest in international vocation/activities, perceived communication competence in English, and communication anxiety in English. The results indicated that students with greater confidence levels had lower levels of anxiety. Students with high motivation levels without high levels of perceived competence were less willing to communicate with others. Another attribute to students’ WTC was their attitude toward intercultural communication. The more interested students were, the higher their WTC. L2 self-confidence proved to be the most important
element, even more important than communicative competence, in influencing WTC (Yashima, 2002).

Physiological Differences and Learning Style and Strategy Preferences

Gender differences in learning have been discovered in many studies (see Feingold, 1992; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Sprigler & Alsup, 2003; Oxford, 1993). Although researching cognitive development is important in understanding basic gender differences, Oxford (1993) tells of studies that show socialization has much to do with these differences, and that socialization “encompasses culturally defined gender moral values, as well as exposure to particular courses and extracurricular activities” (pp. 67-68). Physiology again is cited as a source of explanation for gender differences: it has been suggested that “brain sex” (anatomical differences in heterosexual female brains) causes differences in cognitive development.

In men, the left hemisphere of the brain is responsible for production of verbal activity, and the right hemisphere is more lateralized for abstract or spatial reasoning. Women use both the left and right hemispheres for verbal and spatial activity. Part of their corpus callosum (the bundle of brain fibers allowing the left and right hemispheres to relate information) is proportionally larger, allowing more nearly equal exchange of information between the two hemispheres. Thus, women can be said to have more integrated brain function than men, and this fact may influence second language acquisition:

Based on the research just noted, males might usually process the L2 more readily through the left-hemispheric, analytic mode, but females might more often
process the L2 through the right-hemispheric, global mode or through an integration of left- and right-hemispheric modes. This implication is that mixed-gender L2 instruction should use aspects of both modes, thus including a variety of analytic activities and global-fluency tasks. (Oxford, 1993, p. 70)

Considering genetic make-up and how human development and gender are related to differences found in levels of language acquisition of males and females, examining gender differences in learning strategies are of equal importance in understanding ways to increase L2 acquisition. Specifically, learning strategies are more explicit than learning styles because strategies are particular behaviors that students employ to increase their understanding, storage, retrieval, and use of what they have learned (Rigney, 1978). Successful learners usually associate newfound knowledge with information already learned in past studies, which separates experts from novices. A strategy becomes useful to a student when it relates to the task, fits the particular student’s preference, and can actively be employed and used again when necessary. That strategy, then, involves the ability to link strategies. Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which grouped strategies into six categories based on factor analyses, include:

- **Cognitive strategies**, which enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, such as through reasoning, note-taking, analysis, and synthesizing.

- **Metacognitive strategies**, which are used to manage the overall learning process, such as identifying one’s own preferences and needs and monitoring tasks.
Memory-related strategies, which allow for learners to link one L2 item or concept with another, such as using acronyms and key words, but may not involve deep understanding.

Compensatory strategies, which help students fill in the gaps of missing knowledge, such as guessing from context or using circumlocution.

Affective strategies, used to help students manage emotion and motivation levels by identifying one’s mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, and using deep breathing or positive self-talk.

Social strategies, which enable the learner to understand through interaction with others, such as asking questions, asking for clarification, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring both cultural and social norms.

(Ehrman et al., 2003, pp. 316-317)

It is presumed that successful language learners are not afraid to make mistakes, that they guess willingly and accurately when needed, that they focus on the meaning and structure of the language, that they monitor their speech and the speech of others when practicing the language, and that they generally want to communicate with others (Rubin, 1975). Students at the head of the class use proper emotional strategies to cope with the stresses brought with language learning (Naiman, Frohlich, & Todesco, 1975). Understanding these differences is certainly important in discovering ways to enhance the achievement of college students in any subject, but especially in language acquisition.

Learners are not as influenced by their instructors as they are influenced by styles that they have developed in previous educational experiences. Field-independent, analytic
learners, typically males, will select strategies that involve logic and deductive reasoning, regardless of specific circumstances they encounter. The tactile, field-independent male learners produce good results in the classroom when they manipulate objects and look for ways to create physical responses to problem solving. Females, on the other hand, are field-dependent learners, preferring non-analytic strategies that involve finding the main idea from available contextual clues. Females also seek visual input found in reading. They will engage in social constructs while simultaneously using auditory memory devices (such as rhyming or acronym designations). Females are reflective learners and examine details before providing responses. Males, who are more impulsive, will respond quickly with answers, regardless whether they are sure those answers are correct (Oxford, 1993).

It is important for teachers to develop ways to make the classroom environment more comfortable to bring anxiety levels down. Oxford (1993) suggests considering the learning styles of L2 students and tailoring the curriculum to these styles. Understanding how students learn is just as important as understanding what students learn. Again, questions of gender differences and learning to consider these differences are critical in positive learning situations. Style contrasts, Oxford tells us, will inevitably exist between males and females. Emphasizing the variety of skills people can bring to the class will reduce anxiety levels and second language proficiency can increase.

Anxiety and Second Language Learning

Studies suggest that females show a greater tendency toward anxiety in the classroom than males even several years before they enter college. A study measuring
language anxiety in Mexican girls reports such findings (Pappamihiel, 2001). Using the English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS), modeled from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), 178 Mexican middle school ESL students (91 boys and 87 girls) were surveyed. The ELAS requires informants to respond to two different scenarios, one in the ESL classroom and the other in the mainstream classroom. This distinction is important because levels of anxiety felt in the ESL classroom vary a great deal from levels felt in the mainstream classroom (Pappamihiel, 2001). Gender, anxiety levels, and learning situations were correlated. Females in the mainstream classes, but not in the ESL class, admitted to feeling anxiety more often. The data suggested that there were different types of anxiety that affected girls, specifically performance anxiety in relation to interaction with peers. Performance anxiety, in fact, registered the highest in the mainstream classroom. In ESL classes, girls noted that their anxiety was mostly related to worries about their levels of achievement (Pappamihiel, 2001). These results are consistent with other findings that female students are more concerned about language difficulties and are generally more anxious than males (Padilla, Cervantes, Maldonado, & Garcia, 1988; Bernstein, Garfinkel, & Hoberman, 1989; Gierl & Rogers, 1996; Plancherel & Bolognini, 1995).

Females’ levels of nervousness seem to have everything to do with their surroundings according to this particular study. Evidence also has suggested that girls tend to develop closer interpersonal relationships with their teachers (Bracken and Crain, 1994). This dependence on interpersonal relationships may help alleviate anxiety in the ESL classroom. Pappamihiel’s research showed that in the ESL classroom, academic-
related anxiety was likely. Female students may build their relationships with teachers to augment English language achievement while reducing anxiety (at the same time). The overall decreased levels of anxiety in ESL classes may be due to the sense of “camaraderie” that students feel (p. 4).

In classes not related to ESL, such as math or science classes, studies showed that girls experience a great deal of peer-related anxiety. Females in the mainstream classes did not have an efficient coping strategy to deal with the frustrations they were feeling in the class. As a result, their anxiety levels significantly increased. Bracken and Crain (1994) mention that during adolescence, interpersonal relationships fluctuate, and students rely less on their teachers for support and more on their peers. With peer groups changing when in mainstream classes, girls may feel additional stress. Pappamihiel (2001) relates anecdotal evidence from ESL teachers that educators should avoid placing L2 students in only mainstream classes because old relationships established in ESL classes will certainly suffer. Female students develop anxiety-ridden habits early in their educational careers, long before entering college. Girls are desperate to participate but avoid becoming involved because of their feelings of intimidation. These students are marginalized because they are hindered by both their ethnicity and their gender (Losey, 1995). In one study examining the roles of Japanese women, it was shown that many women were stoic, quiet, and subservient. The Japanese women were not expected to learn English, or even want to learn it, yet were concerned with their children’s acquisition of English. Women wanted their children to be “equipped to work in an increasingly global society” (Wilson, 2004, p. 32). It is also noted by Hsieh (2006) that
some studies (e.g., Pendersen, 1991; Zhang, 2000) show that Asians more than students of other nationalities experience the most difficulty adapting to American culture. Female Asian students may indeed experience more anxiety than any other group of international students because of cultural restraints.

Women are not alone in experiencing anxiety though. A study focusing on both male and female international students in a foreign country reports that many men and women experienced stress-induced problems, including loss of appetite and weight, as well as the onset of illnesses accompanied by fever (Ito, 2004). Nguyen and Peterson (1993) discovered that depressive symptoms in Vietnamese American college students experiencing stress and anxiety in adapting to U.S. society was significant. Jou (1995) studied the effects of support systems with foreign students and found that during the important early period that students are in the United States, for about the first three months, it is crucial to facilitate adjustments through social support, regardless of whether the students are male or female.

Because anxiety can have a profound effect on students and their language acquisition, a tool designed to measure anxiety was constructed to help both instructors and students alike. Horwitz et al. (1986) shows that the problems associated with anxiety in connection with language learning “represent serious impediments to the development of second language fluency as well as to performance” (p. 127). Examining anxiety levels in both sexes is necessary to understand how to increase acquisition in the L2. Poor test performance and his or her inability to communicate in class contribute to the instructor’s
assessment of the student’s skills. This assessment is frequently inaccurate (Horwitz et al., 1986).
Methods for Examining Anxiety in Male and Female ESL/EFL Students

Subjects

Participants in my original study were 96 university students enrolled in at least one ESL class in the United States. There were 53 males and 43 females in the study. Males ranged in age from 16-44, with a mean of 22.9 years of age. Females ranged in age from 19-47, with a mean of 23.1 years of age. The students spoke thirteen different languages. Chinese, Korean, and Japanese were the languages represented the most.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native Language</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Females 0</td>
<td>Males 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Females 16</td>
<td>Males 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Females 1</td>
<td>Males 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>Females 0</td>
<td>Males 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>Females 0</td>
<td>Males 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>Females 0</td>
<td>Males 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Females 6</td>
<td>Males 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Females 8</td>
<td>Males 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Females 1</td>
<td>Males 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Females 6</td>
<td>Males 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>Females 2</td>
<td>Males 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Females 0</td>
<td>Males 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants were asked how many years they have studied English and lived in the United States. A self-rating of their proficiency in English on a scale of 1-6 (1 being very low and 6 being very high) was included in this questionnaire. The average number of years studying English and living in the U.S. was higher for females, but males generally rated their proficiency level higher than females. Some students did not provide information other than gender.

Table 2.

Average Years Spent Studying English,
Time in U.S., and Self-Rated Proficiency Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rating</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (See Appendix A) which consisted of a 33-item questionnaire with responses based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), the items on the FLCAS are reflective of communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation by students.
studying a foreign language. Students were also asked to fill out a brief learner profile as mentioned above.

Data Collection and Analysis

The participants completed the survey in about 10-15 minutes during their second language classes. I conducted and collected all surveys myself, but had to discard six because they either contained multiple answers for one or more items or were not fully completed. The Chi-Square ratio made it possible to determine whether or not significant differences between males and females actually existed by measuring the probability \(p\) that the difference between two estimates could have occurred by chance. The larger the \(p\)-value, the more likely the difference could have occurred by chance alone. Responses with a \(p\)-value (or the probability of acquiring a certain result) of less than .05 were considered significant.
Results of Study

As shown in this study, gender is a chief factor in levels of anxiety experienced by students. The study supports the previous findings that males and females respond differently to the pressures felt in learning environments. The results also suggest that males and females have different stances concerning the consequences of their performance and how they are perceived by other students. Specifically, the results of the survey revealed some interesting findings, including that 12 of the 33 questions from the FLCAS indicated significant differences between males and females (see also Appendix B):

Table 3

Questions on Survey that Revealed Significant Differences between Males and Females and *p* value (the *probability* that the deviation of the observed from that expected is due to chance alone)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items</th>
<th><em>p</em>-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I don't</em> worry about making mistakes in language class.</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I keep thinking</em> that the other students are better at languages than I am.</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I am usually at ease</em> during tests in my language class.</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I worry about</em> the consequences of failing my language class.</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I don't understand</em> why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In language class,</em> I get so nervous I forget the things I know.</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I feel confident</em> when I speak in foreign language class.</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I can feel my heart pounding</em> when I'm going to be called on in language class.</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I don’t feel pressure to prepare well for language class.

I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in any other class.

I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.

I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared for in advance.

Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension is characterized by fear or anxiety when a person is faced with a situation in which they will have to communicate with others (Horwitz et al., 1986). The respondents of this study were surveyed on statements that allow an examination of whether they experience apprehension of communicating in the L2. There were roughly thirteen items on the FLCAS that dealt with communication apprehension. The responses between males and females differed greatly in these thirteen items. Their responses showed that females experience more anxiety in certain situations than their male counterparts. These specific statements are:

- I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language.
- It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
- I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
- I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.
• I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
• I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
• I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
• I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
• I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
• I get nervous when I don’t understand every word the language teacher says.
• I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak the foreign language.
• I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
• I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.

The responses between males and females significantly differed in a few questions that fell into this category (roughly four out of thirteen). For instance, for the item, “I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do,” 14% of females and 3% of males reported strongly agreeing. Fifty-six percent of females and 42% of males responded that they agreed to this statement, while 21% of males and only 9% of
females disagreed. Thirteen percent of males and 0% of females strongly disagreed. For the item “I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class,” 42% of males agreed, while only 21% of females did. Likewise, 9% of males and 30% of females disagreed with this statement. While 47% of males and 33% of females agreed to the statement, “I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes,” only 2% of males strongly agreed with it, while 26% of females did. Twenty-six percent of males and 21% of females disagreed with this statement. For the item, “I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language,” 12% of males responded that they agree, while 37% of females did. Likewise, 47% of males disagreed with the statement and only 28% of females reported not feeling this way. These results show that in the area of communicating in the L2, there are certainly instances in which females experience more anxiety than males. As Horwitz et al. (1986) suggests, many things can contribute to a student’s tension and frustration when learning a second language. Many students feel as if a foreign language should not be spoken until they can do so without mistakes. When they feel this way, anxiety increases because “students are expected to communicate in the second tongue before fluency is attained and even excellent language students make mistakes or forget words and need to guess more than occasionally” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 127).

Test Anxiety

It is not uncommon for students to feel anxiety before, during, and after taking an exam. This study allowed for introspection about whether males and females experience
anxiety in testing situations in different quantities. The three questions on the FLCAS that dealt primarily with testing anxiety are

- I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
- In language class, I get so nervous I forget the things I know.
- The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.

Of these three questions, two provided results indicating that females are more anxious than males. For example, 42% of males and 21% of females responded that they agreed with the statement, “I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.” Only 13% of males disagreed with this statement, but 40% of females disagreed. Horwitz et al. (1986) note that anxiety often causes students to forget the things they know when taking tests. For the item, “In language class, I get so nervous I forget the things I know,” 34% of males and 60% of females agreed. Thirteen percent of males strongly disagreed to this statement, and only 2% of females did. These results indicate that females experience more anxiety than their male counterparts when taking language tests.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Watson and Friend (1969) define fear of negative evaluation as “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (cited in Horwitz et al., 1986, p.128). Differences between males and females were also evident in items dealing with trepidation of evaluation. The items on the FLCAS concerning students’ fear of negative evaluation are:

- I don’t worry about making mistakes in language class.
• I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
• I don’t understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.
• I can feel my heart pounding when I’m going to be called on in language class.
• I don’t feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
• I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared for in advance.

Again, these questions indicate females are more anxious than males. For the item “I don’t worry about making mistakes in language class,” 26% of males agreed, whereas only 9% of females did. Likewise, 30% of males disagreed, and for females, that number doubled to 60%. When asked about worrying of the consequences of failing a language course, 33% of females strongly agreed to the commonality of this fear, while only 2% of males did. For the same item, 49% of males disagreed that they worry of failing, while only 19% of females did. Thirty-four percent of males claimed that they do not understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes, while 19% of females agreed to this statement (which was the same percentage of males who disagreed). Fifty-three percent of females responded that they disagreed with the item. Fifteen percent of males noted that they can feel their hearts pounding when they know they are going to be called on in class, and 40% of females agreed. Forty-seven percent of males surveyed disagreed with this item, and for females, the percentage was twenty-eight. Thirty-eight percent of males responded that they agreed to not feeling pressure to
prepare well for language class, whereas half that amount, or 16%, of females responded the same way. Likewise, 23% of males marked “disagree” for the item, and 54% of females did. The final item on the FLCAS, “I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared for in advance,” showed that 16% of females marked strongly agree, whereas males marked only a quarter of that, four percent. Thirty percent of males and 58% of females responded that they agreed to this statement (both fairly high percentages), 30% of males also disagreed, whereas only 5% of females did. This final item on the scale provided evidence of one of the greatest percentage differences between males and females (p=.00), along with the items, “I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class,” and “I worry about the consequences of failing my language class.” When the p-value is .00, it shows an extreme significant difference between males and females, more so than if the percentage was higher.

Although 12 items revealed significant differences between males and females, the responses to the other 21 items on the FLCAS showed no significant differences between the two, as shown in Table 4 (see also Appendix C):

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language.</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in language class.</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language. .15

It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more foreign language classes. .40

During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course. .78

I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class. .14

The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get. .05

It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class. .17

I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers. .11

I get upset when I don’t understand what the teacher is correcting. .13

Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it. .08

I often feel like not going to my language class. .68

I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake that I make. .32

I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do. .26

I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students. .28

Language classes move so quickly that I worry about getting left behind. .16

I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class. .10
When I’m on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.

I get nervous when I don’t understand every word the teacher says.

I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.

Responses to several items from the FLCAS showed that anxiety is experienced by both males and females when learning a new language. The percentages of students indicating having felt anxiety were high (see Appendix C). Most respondents showed that they do feel anxiety in the classroom. It is important to look at these statements, too, even if no significant differences between males and females exist. For example, we see this in the survey item, “It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.” For this item, 38% of males agreed, and 53% of females did. Thirty-six percent of males and 56% percent of females remarked that it was embarrassing to volunteer answers in language class, and 37% of males and 60% females concurred that they get upset when they do not understand what the teacher is correcting. Probably the most forthright item on the FLCAS, because it specifically asks students whether or not they are anxious, is “Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.” Results from this statement were that 40% of females and 30% of males agreed. For the item “I always feel that the other students speak the foreign
language better than I do,” 38% of males and 49% of males agreed, while only 15% of males and 12% of females disagreed. Forty-percent of males commented feeling self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students, and 53% of females felt the same way. Thirty-seven percent of males and 53% of females agreed that language classes often move so quickly that they feel as if they may get left behind, and 38% of males and 60% of females reported feeling nervous when they do not understand every word the teacher says, whereas only 19% of males and 9% of females disagreed with this statement. Finally, 36% of males and 53% of females agreed feeling overwhelmed by the number of rules necessary to learn in order to speak a foreign language. The results from these selected statements do not reveal statistically significant differences between males and females, but do show an overall tendency for foreign language students to experience anxiety when learning to acquire a second language.

Based on evidence from responses of the FLCAS, it appears that females more often than males worry about making mistakes in language class and the consequences of a poor performance. It also seems that females may be more concerned with how they are perceived by others. Several noted feeling pressure to prepare for class and believed they had low confidence in their abilities to speak the foreign language. The next section will be devoted to discussing the findings of this study and to exploring ways in which feelings of anxiety can be reduced for ESL/EFL students.
Discussion

The main objective of this study was twofold: To find out whether or not ESL/EFL students experience anxiety in the classroom, and to determine whether males or females experience anxiety at different levels. After analyzing the data, the results showed that ESL/EFL students do, in fact, experience aggravated stress in the classroom. Gender does play a role in increased anxiety levels, which, based on reviewed literature, we already know hinders language acquisition (e.g., Ehrman, 1996; Hao et al., 2004; Horwitz et al., 1986; Ohata; 2005; Pappamihiel, 2001).

The reviewed literature provides some explanation to the differences in learning preferences of males and females, and their differing anxiety levels. For example, Oxford (1993) noted that females show more empathy and concern in learning situations than do males, perhaps contributing to their greater fear that they will be laughed at by other students when speaking the foreign language. Oxford (1993) also mentions that when speaking in the L2, men dominated conversation, whereas females generally initiate more negotiations of meaning and try to communicate clearly, perhaps indicating why 42% of males in this study agreed to feeling confident when speaking the foreign language, while half that, only 21%, of females agreed. Furthermore, it was noted by Oxford (1993) that females want to think about possible answers before responding, whereas males jump rapidly to conclusions. These differences may explain why females in this particular study responded more often than males that they can feel their heart pounding when they know they are going to be asked to respond to questions in class, and that they are more nervous than males when they know they are going to be called on without preparation.
One apparent element to my research was that many students responded *neither* to several statements. In fact, for almost all of the items, at least a quarter of students, both male and female, responded this way. There were results from items that did not reveal significant differences between males and females, and for these items, a large percentage of students marked neither on their surveys (see Appendix C). For example, almost half of females (44%) chose neither as their response for the survey item “When I’m on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.” In another example, 34% of males and 40% of females chose neither as a response to the item, “I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.” If students had not had the option of choosing *neither* as a response on the FLCAS, there may have been many more instances in which significant differences between males and females were present. Perhaps when students were unsure of the meaning of the statement or didn’t know how to answer, responding *neither* was the easiest choice to make. When students respond this way, it does make how they are feeling in the classroom a little more difficult to decipher; or perhaps they simply felt indifferent to the statement.

Although it appeared that both males and females experience anxiety in the classroom, some results surprisingly showed otherwise. In the case of male students, some provided information insinuating that in select cases, they *didn’t* feel much anxiety, if any at all. For instance, for the statement “When I’m on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed,” 41% of males agreed or strongly agreed, while only 2% strongly disagreed. Also, for the item, “I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class,” only 4% of males strongly agreed, and 13% strongly disagreed.
Furthermore, while almost a quarter of males agreed that they are afraid that their language teachers are ready to correct every mistake that they make, 32% still disagreed. Finally, 41% of males agreed that they would feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language, and only 17% disagreed. Statements such as these showed that although students may experience foreign language anxiety at different times, there are still instances when a greater number of students feel at ease, an encouraging revelation.

It is imperative that instructors understand the boundaries between not only groups of students from different backgrounds, but also the barriers that separate males and females. Recognizing the extent of differences between students is necessary to reach ultimate language proficiency. This study, although small considering the vast scale of ESL/EFL students in the college setting, revealed that gender differences do exist when examining anxiety levels, and only made it seem more necessary that research should be continued to explore the effect of gender on anxiety and its connections to language acquisition.
Recommendations for Instructors of ESL/EFL Classes

Building a Community

Exploring the many ways that instructors can reduce feelings of anxiety by second language students in the classroom is essential. When learners share tasks and build community together, anxiety can be mitigated (Rardin, Tranel, Tirone, & Green, 1988). Following this premise, Ariza (2002) notes that when examining ways to connect with students and adopt successful teaching practices, strategies should be implemented from the Community Language Learning (CLL) Approach, designed specifically to reduce language learning anxiety. In this approach, the target language teacher assumes the role of “counselor” in order to better support his or her students. This approach is unique in that the instructor shows empathy for the “emotional threat” posed in situations in which a person is learning a new language and exhibits consideration of the student’s anxiety.

Ariza (2002) also notes that there are essentially five learning strategies that foreign language students go through as they acquire the target language. Stage One involves a language beginner who relies solely on the instructor for everything. The most basic activity in this stage is the mere repetition of words in the target language by the student. Ariza (2002) mentions using a game called the “Human Computer,” for example, in which the teacher translates (in English) the words or phrases of students and has them repeat them again and again. The teacher records the students speaking, and when the exercise is complete, plays it back for them to hear. Students will hear themselves engaging in inane conversation with one another, which is not only fun, but also overflowing with grammar, semantics, and vocabulary. Stage Two occurs when the
student begins using the second language more frequently, but not without the
“counseling” of the teacher. The student will then progress to an independent language
learner and may even resist correction by the instructor (Stage Three). In Stage Four, role
reversal will begin, in which the student is very fluent and the teacher must attempt to
understand the acquired language as spoken by the student. During the final stage, the
student will have metalinguistic (the relation between language and other cultural factors)
competence and is completely able to learn independently (Curran, 1976; cited in Ariza,
2002). Although most instructors would accept even reaching Stage Three with their
students, this, it seems, is nearly impossible without the understanding, guidance, and
open group environment that can only be truly provided by the instructor. Encouraging
students to embark upon their learning process together is important. Ariza (2002) notes
that building relationships is the first step in paving the path of improved language
acquisition:

By implementing CLL strategies, language learners can conquer their fears of
making a mistake, gain greater self-confidence, and bond with the teacher in a non-
threatening classroom, thus promoting language acquisition. The typical activities
included in this method are: small numbers of students in conversation circles,
transcription of student-generated text via the “Human Computer,” card games, small
group tasks, and reflecting facilities due to the broad scope and usage of combined
modalities. The variety of methods within this approach to teaching can address any
number of language learning styles, and calm the most apprehensive learners (p.725).
When examining ways to create “community in the classroom,” Williams (2001) suggests that simply using words such as *we, together, friends, teams, partners,* and *neighbors,* may aid in the community building task. Expecting all students to participate in activities, regardless of gender, is also pertinent. When teachers devote their energy to ensuring that all students are involved before focusing on evaluation of the students’ progress, anxiety levels may decrease. Examples of ways to foster a feeling of community include responding to all students’ comments and encouraging students to work as a team.

In a study aimed at identifying factors that students find may contribute to increased anxiety, Worde (2003) also notes that a sense of community was suggested by many students as a way to make them feel more at ease in the classroom. The participants of the study completed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and responded to questions such as *Do students believe that anxiety hinders language acquisition?* and *Which factors may help to reduce anxiety?* Some students made minor suggestions such as sitting in a semi-circle or oval because “in a circle you’re kind of like one in a crowd” (p.7). Nearly all the students made a direct connection between a relaxed classroom environment and a reduction in anxiety. Rardin et al. (1988) suggest that learners’ anxiety can be reduced when students (both male and female), share work and communicate openly with one another. When students progress alongside one another, they may forget any apprehension or uneasiness they feel in the classroom. With students working together, the end result may be an increase in language acquisition. Likewise,
group work may prove more beneficial for students than other language teaching strategies, such as traditional grammar drills (Ariza, 2002).

**Accommodating to Students**

Williams (2001) offers an array of ways to foster language development in the classroom, like realizing that language proficiency refers to more than just speaking. Because oral language skills do not necessarily precede written skills, students should be encouraged to read at their reading level, which may not be the same as their oral proficiency level. She also suggests avoiding idioms or synonyms during instruction, because although they are important forms of language in many contexts, they may confuse students who are beginning to learn a new language. One very important instruction provided by Williams (2001) was to speak clearly, give clear directions, and allow plenty of time for students to respond to questions. When teachers give students at least three seconds to answer, there are dramatic changes in the use of the target language by the pupil. Instructors should also acknowledge when students make the effort to help one another, and should also structure activities to “allow choice and numerous opportunities for practice and interaction to foster the assumption that all students are members of the learning community” (Williams, 2001, p. 756). Finally, instructors should also point out that they are learners as well and can gain from having a widely diversified classroom.

Another way that the instructor may better understand how students are feeling is through a language sensitivity exercise. In this exercise students are asked to write about a time in which language barriers prevented them from actively communicating with
others. Students are likely to feel alienated when they cannot communicate effectively with native English speakers, and understanding situations in which they felt this way may help instructors understand ways in which to overcome these barriers (Dong, 2004). These “language sensitivity exercises” may prove beneficial to both male and female students (as well as instructors), in that those students are not only expressing themselves, but are also given the opportunity to practice writing in the target language.

When language students experience “acculturative stress,” or stress due to cultural differences found between a host culture and an incoming culture, the result will be an increase in anxiety by students and a likewise decrease in acquisition of a language (Tong, Huang, & McIntyre, 2006). There are many ways that instructors can relate to foreign/second language students. First, teachers should attempt to learn the cultures of the students. When instructors become aware of the values and practices of their students, it will promote understanding and acceptance in the classroom. A strategy for doing this is to locate cultural informants, or individuals who are familiar with a certain cultural group and can share their experiences. These informants might be other teachers or paraprofessionals of that heritage or ethnic group. Although it would be nearly impossible to discover everything about the background of a student’s heritage, teachers might, at the very least, find our things that contrast with expectations of American institutions, such as the “correct” distance to stand apart from someone when speaking with him or her.

Teachers should also strive to develop personal relationships with students new to the United States. These students are not only likely to feel anxiety about school, but are
also learning to accommodate to their new surroundings, which only increases feelings of apprehension and nervousness. When students feel valued and welcomed by their teachers, their anxiety will decrease. For example, a welcoming smile translates to all cultural or ethnic groups (Tong et al., 2006). It seems that the role of the teacher is vital in reducing anxiety in ESL students, and perhaps more important than particular methodologies alone, as Price (1991, p.106) reports that “instructors [play] a significant role in the amount of anxiety each student [experiences] in particular classes” (cited in Worde, 2003, p. 7). If teachers initiate from the beginning of the semester an interest in understanding and differentiating between students’ backgrounds, the students may feel more accepted despite their unfamiliar settings.

Adjusting teaching styles to match the preferred learning styles of students is likewise important (Tong et al., 2006). Adopting new teaching styles can also be applied to differences in preferences of learning styles between males and females. We already know that males and females may differ in favored learning strategies. For example, in a study by Bacon (1992, p.165) investigating the strategies used by students when listening to L2 texts with varying levels of difficulty, it was found that while all learners recognized English translations while listening to the texts, men reported doing so more often than females. The self-reports of the males included statements that they translated as much Spanish into English as possible. For example, one male participant noted that he had a “dictionary in my head” (cited in Grace, 2000, p. 215). Women, on the other hand, used strategies such as inferring or guessing the meaning of the passages based on the context and bypassed English. One woman, for example, said, “I try to think only in
Spanish” (cited in Grace, 2000, p.215). Considering these findings, it could be inferred that in general, males may spend more time looking up words when translating passages, whereas females generally guess more often, and could likewise potentially retain more vocabulary in the end. To accommodate to these differences, teachers could place males and females in small groups during vocabulary exercises so that they may work together and share their strategies.

Oxford (1993) mentions a study of 500 ESL learners from Australia, in which Willing (1988) revealed some important L2 learning strategies of males and females. In this study, women showed more often than their male counterparts an interest in learning new words by using visual modality, kinesthetic, and auditory learning strategies by seeing the new words, learning the new words by “doing something,” and verbally using the new words. Men proved to be more visual. They preferred to learn new words by writing in their notebooks. This is relevant in that in this study, females seemed to use particular learning strategies more often than males. For example, females might be more likely to use strategies of elaboration and selective attention while listening. While reading, a female student is more likely to use strategies like reading aloud, guessing, deduction, and summarizing than a male student.

When teachers can better identify learning strategy preferences by males and females, they may be able to tailor their curriculum to better fit the needs of students, which may decrease anxiety. The importance of identifying the major areas of teacher preparation for language instructors is considered pertinent to developing a classroom that will allow for successful language acquisition. Teachers can do this by building
empathy toward language learners and understanding the difficulties they may face, increasing awareness of the processes that these students must endure in order to acquire a second/foreign language, integrating appropriate disciplines specific to the literacy skills of all students, and most importantly, knowing how to adapt curriculum to the students’ cultural needs (Dong, 2004; Genesee, 1993; Meyer, 2000; Mora, 2000; Teemant et al., 1996). When teachers are able to identify these areas of preparation, they are more likely to show sensitivity toward second/foreign language learners and are therefore able to develop the effective strategies necessary for these students to more adequately acquire the language. It is possible that teachers will often have a class dominated by one gender or the other in number or personality, and when this happens, adaptations must be made.

Considering this, it is necessary for instructors to assess the learning styles of L2 students and accept that gender-related differences may appear. Oxford (1993) suggests that teachers can use data to better tailor instruction to create a balance between the sexes in the classroom. When teachers provide a greater range of activities—thinking and feeling oriented, visual and auditory, analytical and global—they may be able to offer enough variety to fit the needs of all or most students, both male and female. When teachers strive to “[appeal] to all possible styles [it] is the best preventive medicine for L2 style problems” (p. 80). Instructors can also allow a 30-second waiting time to require or encourage impulsive or conversation-dominating students (who are typically males) to contemplate what they are going to say before answering. Activities such as skits or timed games can also be used to utilize the skills of these students who respond rapidly.
When considering the learning style preferences of females, who usually more reflective learners, Oxford (1993) suggests that through multiple small group activities, teachers can actively encourage these students to be more unprompted to respond.

Tactile/kinesthetic students, who are typically males, may enjoy a myriad of multisensory activities that allow them to move around and handle objects while acquiring the L2. Teachers should also offer females, who are typically visual and auditory students, the sensory stimulation necessary to best fit their learning style preferences. For example, a female visual Korean student in Oxford’s (1993) study mentioned a problem she had with tactile/kinesthetic professor who tended to demonstrate certain kinds of actions when teaching, like miming or dancing. In her previous learning experiences in Korea, most teachers emphasized learning by reading, which meant a lot of information was expelled by the teacher by writing on the chalkboard. Without the written presentation of material for this visual female student, she felt as if she didn’t learn as much as she could have by a professor with different methods.

Honigsfeld and Dunn (2003) conducted a study examining preferences in learning styles by males and females, and found that males were more peer-oriented than females, but that females were more self-motivated, persistent, and responsible than males. Both male and female ESL/EFL students showed an interest in learning activities that included charts and puzzles, musical instruments or words that rhyme, movement, acting, and cooperative tasks (cited in Loori, 2005). Whether male or female, students are usually aware of the learning styles they find most effective and enjoyable. With the help
of instructors, L2 learners can engage in activities that are most appropriate for their learning needs (Oxford & Lavine, 1991).
Conclusion

Students studying ESL/EFL, whether they are predisposed to anxiety or not, can experience it in a variety of different contexts or situations. The survey included in this thesis explores anxiety felt by both males and females in the foreign language classroom. An emphasis is placed on significant differences between levels of anxiety between males and females. Exploring differences in style and strategy preferences by males and females may allow for the teacher to adapt his or her classroom to better fit the needs of students, and therefore decrease anxiety. Williams (2001) notes and we all realize “The emotional climate of a classroom is of extreme importance in fostering academic progress” (p. 755).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix A

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

SA=strongly agree  A=agree  N=neither agree nor disagree  
D=disagree   SD=strongly disagree

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
   SA A N D SD

2. I don’t worry about making mistakes in language class.
   SA A N D SD

3. I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in language class.
   SA A N D SD

4. It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
   SA A N D SD

5. It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.
   SA A N D SD

6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
   SA A N D SD

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
   SA A N D SD

8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
   SA A N D SD

9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
   SA A N D SD

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
    SA A N D SD

11. I don’t understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.
    SA A N D SD

12. In language class, I get so nervous I forget things I know.
    SA A N D SD

13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
    SA A N D SD

14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.
    SA A N D SD

15. I get upset when I don’t understand what the teacher is correcting.
    SA A N D SD

16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
    SA A N D SD

17. I often feel like not going to my language class.
    SA A N D SD
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
   SA A N D SD
18. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake that I make.
   SA A N D SD
19. I can feel my heart pounding when I’m going to be called on in language class.
   SA A N D SD
20. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
   SA A N D SD
21. I don’t feel pressure to prepare well for language class.
   SA A N D SD
22. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
   SA A N D SD
23. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
   SA A N D SD
24. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
   SA A N D SD
25. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in any other class.
   SA A N D SD
26. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
   SA A N D SD
27. When I’m on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
   SA A N D SD
28. I get nervous when I don’t understand every word the teacher says.
   SA A N D SD
29. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
   SA A N D SD
30. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
   SA A N D SD
31. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
   SA A N D SD
32. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared in advance.
   SA A N D SD

(Hortwitz, et al., 1986, p. 129-130)
### Appendix B

**Questions on Survey and Percentage of Responses that Revealed Significant Differences between Males and Females**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t worry about making mistakes in language class.</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>21%</td>
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<td>I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.</td>
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<td>I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.</td>
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<td>I worry about the consequences of failing my language class.</td>
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<td>I don’t understand why Some people get so upset over foreign language classes.</td>
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<td>In language class, I get so nervous I forget the things I know.</td>
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<td>I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.</td>
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<td>I can feel my heart pounding when I’m going to be called on in language class.</td>
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<td>I don’t feel pressure to prepare well for language class.</td>
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### Appendix C

**Questions on Survey and Percentages of Responses that did not Reveal Significant Differences between Males and Females**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language.</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in language class.</td>
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<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.</td>
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<td>I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.</td>
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I would *not* be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.  

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I get upset when I don’t understand what the teacher is correcting.  

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Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.  

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I often feel like not going to my language class.  

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I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake that I make.  

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I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.  

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I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.  

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Language classes move so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.  

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I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class  

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When I’m on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.  

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<tr>
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I get nervous when I don’t  

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<td>Survey Question</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand every word the teacher says.</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.</td>
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