

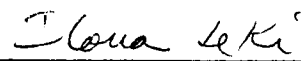
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Melissa Anne Connolly entitled "The Experience of Language Anxiety of Foreign Language Learners in a University Setting." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Curriculum and Instruction.


Dr. Patricia Davis-Wiley, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:





Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

**THE EXPERIENCE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY OF
FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN A UNIVERSITY
SETTING**

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Melissa Anne Connolly

August, 1995

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father, Lynda Lou Brown and James Edward Connolly, with much love and gratitude.

With the chronic reminders of the details in life being important and requiring amendments or re-adjustments to comply here and there--to this standard or that--it's exceptional and precious to have someone in your life that reminds you that the dream is always bigger than the details, and that it's important not to lose sight of the dream, the reason the details may be there in the first place. Although I have met several people along the way that have espoused something of the sort to succor me in various moments of "lost vision," none have been the steadfast pillar of support, the guide to life that my father has been for me in these trying years of impediments, trials, and ensuing character endowments. I thank a higher being everyday for his guidance, his friendship, his faith, and the example he provides in his own life of discipline, empathy and compassion, and pursuit of life's true joys. Having confronted many trials and tribulations in his own life, he has blessed me with the shared experience of these and the wisdom that comes from a commitment to see one's self through the "muck and mire," as he would put it. His profound influence on my life has given me the equipment necessary to commit my life to the pursuit of fulfillment, not only for myself, but for those I can impact as well. My appreciation for my father extends beyond words and lives in place far removed from the realms of our limited imaginations. He knows this place. Of that, if nothing else in life, I am certain.

Keeping sight of the dream is important in anyone's journey, but there are indeed details with which one must deal to gain access to the dream. My mother has provided the greatest example of one who contends with the details in life unabashedly and has been a steadfast pillar of a different sort of support through my struggle to achieve further education. Having her close in physical proximity, she has seen me at my worst and thought better of me, and brought me the physical and emotional comforts I have needed throughout to keep me off the streets--warm, safe, and ready to face life's daunting and challenging moments day in and day out. My mother's experience with life has provided profound insights for me in ways different than that of my father's, yet, she has proved to be an invaluable guide to life for me as well. Even through our differences, her faith in me has been sound, never dim or tenuous, and I have a higher being to thank for her as well.

Having had such credence from the two most important figures in my development as a complete and educated person, has made being a complete and educated person a do-able task. And, I am getting there. It may take this life time, but with the visual aids that the two of them have provided, I can see that I am on my way.

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Next, I would like to thank each of the members of my committee for their support and willingness to see this project through to its completion. With the sharpest eye for detail, my major professor Dr. Patricia Davis-Wiley has contributed immensely to the shaping and refining of the details of this study which, in turn, has helped me achieve a quality presentation of my work. I am unduly grateful for her resourceful and knowledgeable contribution. I am convinced as well that Dr. Kathleen deMarrais' ability to pull structure out of chaos and to find meaning when meaning seems lost, is an immeasurable blessing for beginning qualitative researchers such as myself, and I am truly grateful for her input and expertise. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Ilona Leki, whose constant erudite probes and insights have guided my research and provided a balance of perspective in my approach to the understanding of language anxiety and the issues of language learners.

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ABSTRACT

This research study is qualitative in its approach to the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety. Drawing on the perceptions of two first-year Spanish students and four second-year French students from a southeastern public university, this study focuses on what foreign language learning anxiety means to these students. The objectives of this qualitative research study were to identify from the learners' perspectives: (1) the anxiety experienced by foreign language learners while learning a second language; (2) the possible causes of and adaptation to foreign language learning anxiety; and (3) the effects of foreign language learning anxiety on foreign language learners.

The participants were selected based on their responses to a distributed questionnaire on foreign language anxiety and brief oral biographical interviews. The researcher used the following criteria for selecting the participants: The students: 1) had to be in a first or second year French or Spanish language course as an undergraduate; 2) could not be pursuing an undergraduate degree in a foreign language; 3) had to have expressed having experienced anxiety in the course of their foreign language study in the college classroom; and 3) had to have French or Spanish as the first language that they continued to study or planned to continue to study.

The participants were interviewed using an interview schedule developed from a review of the literature on the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety. These interviews were later transcribed for data analysis. Portraits of each of the participants were drawn to

characterize and conceive of each participant as a language learner. A thematic structure emerged from the data that provided the findings for the study and led to the development of the *"Vicious Cycle" Model* of language learning anxiety which may be used as a guide for further research on language anxiety.

It is concluded by the researcher that those students who are not able to develop anxiety lessening strategies that facilitate their sense of control in the language learning environment and of their language learning process, may tend to suffer in terms of grades, performance, and learning. The researcher suggests that it may be these students' inaccurate assessment of the language learning situation that leads them to ineffective strategies keeping them on a vicious cycle of language learning anxiety, or perhaps it is an unwillingness to fully and accurately assess this environment. Language teachers can aid in the students' accurate assessment of their language learning experience which may lead to better strategies that facilitate these students' sense of control of the language learning process and environment. Further, it is suggested that language teachers keep an *"open dialogue"* with their students over issues such as the language methodology and materials used in the language class, the students' language learning needs, and the students' language learning anxiety. This dialogue could enable the language teacher to address the language students' needs in the immediate environment of the classroom, alleviating some of the language students' sense of a lack of control which appears to cause language learning anxiety.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Although much research has been done over the past 15 to 20 years on language anxiety which has given researchers insight on the nature of this phenomenon, foreign language anxiety or language learning anxiety remains somewhat elusive to researchers. Not only is the nature of language anxiety not fully understood, but it is also appearing more and more complex as researchers study the phenomenon.

Even so, researchers are not the only people involved with foreign language anxiety that perplexed by the nature of foreign language anxiety. Foreign language students who suffer from foreign language anxiety are often at a loss for understanding what is happening to them when they experience language learning anxiety. Some do not realize they are experiencing anxiety until an event occurs where they are asked to talk about their experience with language learning. By expressing their views of this process, some students begin to see what they are experiencing for the first time. For example, when Michael's French instructor explained why he would not use English in the French classroom, Michael, a university French student, recalls:

Everybody in the class just kind of woke up. Everybody just started giving him some input. People who had been quiet all semester had all this input and everybody...all that anxiety was coming out in everyone.

Everybody was dealing with it right there I think, letting the teacher know what's going on. I think that people deal with classroom anxiety in different ways. Some people don't show up. Others quit studying. Others study harder. Some people cut up in class like I did that one semester. That was a kind of dumping session, but I just kind of reached the boiling point.

Further, as Michael suggests, foreign language students are likely to deal with their anxiety in different ways. These differences can make foreign language anxiety a difficult occurrence to detect for teachers as well as students, and the solutions to the problem may be as complex as the phenomenon and its manifestations, itself.

As *The Good Language Learner* (Frohlich, Naiman, Stern, & Todesco, 1978) points out, for many language learners, success in language learning is difficult and this difficulty often leads to reactions and attitudes that may discourage further positive second language involvement.

Success in language learning is not the rule. Moreover, failure is accompanied by dissatisfaction, awareness of one's own inadequacy, and sometimes annoyance, disappointment, frustration, and even anger at the colossal waste of time. These feelings may spill over into negative attitudes to the L2 and its speakers. (Frohlich, Naiman, Stern, & Todesco, 1978, p.1)

Much of the ensuing failure in language study may largely be the result of foreign language anxiety. Anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, worry, and apprehension (Spielberger, 1983). Language anxiety refers to anxiety involved with the study of a foreign language. Various attempts have been made to determine which learner variables have the most potential to predict success in language

learning. However, those studies focusing on anxiety as one of these learner variables are contradictory and inconclusive (Price, 1988).

Learning and acquiring a foreign language as an adult involves numerous complex processes that are cognitive and affective in nature. Krashen (1981) posits that there are two means by which adults develop second language ability. These means are by subconscious *acquisition* and conscious *learning*. Although he hypothesizes that acquisition is a far more important means of developing second language ability, his Monitor theory (1981) suggests that these systems are not only independent but also interrelated. Because foreign language learning is so complex, isolating variables specific to anxiety brought about by foreign language learning is difficult. The attempts to isolate such variables have led to much contradiction and lack of conclusive statements about foreign language anxiety.

Thus, the issue of identifying foreign language anxiety needs to be addressed. Why should we concern ourselves with the concept of foreign language anxiety? What type of anxiety is foreign language anxiety? Is it related to communication anxiety? Could it be a manifestation of a psychological "trait" or a situational "state" anxiety (Gaudry, Spielberger, & Vagg, 1975)? Is it facilitative or debilitating to language learning (Alpert & Haber, 1960)? Are persons with high motivation to achieve likely to experience

foreign language anxiety? Are there ways of dealing effectively with foreign language anxiety without having to resort to one specific teaching methodology? Or, can any particular teaching methodology sufficiently reduce foreign language anxiety for a majority of students?

Horowitz and Young (1991) describe two general means of viewing language anxiety. Language anxiety can be either the symptom of other more general forms of anxiety (Daly, 1991; Scovel, 1991) or it can be considered as a unique form of anxiety, particular to the language-learning experience (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1991; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). With the former perspective in mind, the dimensions of language anxiety that comprise only anxiety-inducing processes involved in test taking or oral communication, or that are the result of a personality characteristic, can only describe foreign language anxiety in a very limited way. The actual process of learning a foreign language must be taken into account.

The learning environment in which a language learner is placed can have relative impact on the anxiety experienced by the learner. In informal learning environments, which are characterized by a natural setting where the foreign language is the spoken form of communication, language learners must rely on the target language to express themselves. There exists no measured assessment of an informal environment, so the foreign language anxiety experienced is likely to involve

variables somewhat different than those presented in a formal environment (Price, 1988). This study is concerned with the foreign language anxiety experienced as the result of learning in a formal environment.

Statement of the Problem

What we know is that language anxiety can be the result of the unique experience of studying a foreign language. It can be debilitating to the language learner and be based on one's expectations of what it means to learn a foreign language (Horowitz, 1988). Therefore, having a fuller understanding of the phenomenon can lead to addressing foreign language anxiety's debilitating impact on students. Much understanding of this phenomenon can be obtained from further investigation of insider perspectives. The perspectives of students who have experience with foreign language anxiety will be examined in this qualitative study.

Significance of the Study

A review of the literature describes views of language anxiety held by researchers from a cross-section of disciplines such as psychology, communication, neurolinguistics, applied linguistics, second language acquisition, foreign language education and classroom

learning. Indeed, this cross-section indicates that the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety has various dimensions. Even though measurements of foreign language anxiety have been taken along these dimensions, much of the condition cannot be measured, *per se*. Statistical measurements to form generalizations about foreign language anxiety can only go so far in expressing or explaining its occurrence. Therefore, the more subtle and diverse attributes of foreign language anxiety must be recognized for a clear picture of what foreign language anxiety is and what it means to foreign language learners.

Just how foreign language anxiety is perceived affects the research that attempts to discover it and to uncover its mystery as a phenomenon. Theories that address anxiety have been used by researchers in the past to guide the perspectives on foreign language anxiety as well as the research conducted to explore this issue. The literature on anxiety expresses many vantage points from which foreign language anxiety can be approached as a topic for research, but not enough has been done in anxiety research with the use of qualitative methods. Although both qualitative and quantitative approaches have guided the foreign language research available, not much literature exists on foreign language anxiety (Price, 1988). Even so, the vast majority of research on this topic has been quantitative. Since foreign language anxiety is based on lived experience, a full

understanding of this phenomenon requires a balance of contributing research. Such contribution to the research should be phenomenological and, therefore, qualitative in nature.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What are students' beliefs about language learning that lead to anxiety about foreign language study?
 - a) What are students' perceptions about language learning?
 - b) How do students assess their own process of language learning?
- 2) What are students' perceptions about anxiety?
- 3) What are students' perceptions about anxiety in relationship to language learning in a university classroom (a formal setting)?

Purpose of the Study

This research study is qualitative in its approach to the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety. Drawing on the perceptions of university students taking level 1 and level 2 foreign language classes; this study takes a look at what foreign language learning means to these students; how closely tied they feel to the process of language learning; how they see themselves amongst their foreign language peers

and teachers; how they see themselves as students in general; and how they perceive and relate to the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by the following parameters:

1. The study was restricted to a small number of participants (three males and three females) due to its qualitative nature. (The focus is not to get a consensus of opinion on the experience of foreign language anxiety but to hone in on the details of the phenomenon and on those individuals who experience this phenomenon.)

2. No attempt was made to get a mixed sample of ethnicity. However, effort to bound the population (i.e. to limit the population by certain characteristics) by an equal division of males and females was made and was successful. Further, the population was bounded by limiting the participants to those studying either French or Spanish as their target language and to those in their first (level 1) or second (level 2) year of university study. This group of participants was not limited by their experience with language study prior to their university classes, and no considerations were made for the success that each individual may have experienced in learning a foreign language.

3. Contacts for the study were made through a distributed questionnaire on foreign language anxiety. The

students were selected based on their responses to these questionnaires and brief oral biographical interviews. Even though many students responded positively to the question of whether or not they had experienced foreign language anxiety on the questionnaires, few were found willing to participate in the study.

Definition of Terms

1. *Foreign language anxiety* refers to the anxiety experienced by a foreign language learner while studying a second language.

2. *L1* refers to the native or first language of a speaker.

3. *L2* refers to the second language a speaker acquires or attempts to acquire through a process of language development.

4. *Target language* refers to the foreign language on which the learner is focusing for development of proficiency.

5. *Acquisition* carries the distinction described in Krashen's Monitor theory (1981) and, therefore, cannot be used interchangeably with *learning*. He refers to language *acquisition* as the subconscious language development that is identical to the process of first language acquisition. As children acquire their first language, they gain competence in a "hypothesized" stable order of grammatical units. In

other words, these grammatical units appear to researchers to be acquired by children in a systematic, "natural" order (Ellis, 1985).

6. *Language learning* is the second language development that results from conscious implementation of the specific rules of the target language. Methodical error correction in the target language comes from a focused attempt to follow the specific rules of the target language (Krashen & Seliger, 1975).

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in six chapters. Chapter One presents an introduction to the study. Chapter Two is a literature review of the research on anxiety, as it pertains to foreign language anxiety. Chapter Three presents the research design, the participants of the study, and the data gathering and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four reveals individual depictions of the participants through portraits drawn from both the biographical interviews and the open-ended interviews that focus on each participant's experience as a foreign language learner. Chapter Five is a thematic presentation of the data generated from the open-ended interviews. Chapter Six comprises the conclusions of the researcher, implications for classroom practice and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

The following is a review of the literature that presents research offering some insight into the role anxiety plays in foreign language learning. The literature was drawn from ERIC 1966-1992 and Psyc LIT 1974-92 data bases, as well as from selected reference lists and bibliographies of books and articles that appeared to be relevant to the topic of foreign language anxiety. This discussion will involve explorations of anxiety from several different angles, including both communicative and psychological considerations, and focusing on the language learning environment and on strategies to deal with anxiety.

This presentation of the literature pertaining to foreign language anxiety is organized in the following manner. First, the constructs of Trait-State versus situation-specific anxiety are addressed. Next, the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* is discussed, introducing a look at anxiety specific to a debilitating effect. Further, psychological considerations such as self-esteem, risk-taking, ego-boundaries, and inhibition are reviewed. Communication anxiety is presented next, preceding other

possible causes of foreign language anxiety. Finally, some means used to overcome foreign language anxiety are considered in order to provide some depth to the discussion of this phenomenon.

The Constructs of the Trait-State and Situation-Specific Anxieties

The concept of anxiety has been considered in the literature on anxiety as one of three possible constructs: trait, state, and situation-specific anxiety. With these constructs as frameworks, scales have been devised to quantitatively measure and assess anxiety; a few of these scales are presented in this section. The following is a brief presentation and discussion of these constructs as they are presented in the literature by Chrisjohn (1981), Spielberger (1983), and MacIntyre (1988).

Trait Anxiety

Trait anxiety is a stable characteristic specific to certain individuals who perceive stressful situations as a threat (Spielberger, 1983). In other words, individuals who are characteristically predisposed to have anxiety are determined to have trait anxiety (Scovel, 1978). Measures of trait anxiety require personal recollection on a subject's reactions to these stressful and, therefore, threatening situations (MacIntyre, 1988). Several scales to measure trait

anxiety have been devised as early as the *Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale* (Taylor, 1953) and as recent as Spielberger's (1983) *Trait Anxiety Scale*, among others.

State Anxiety

State anxiety is described as elevations of the levels of trait anxiety, and these elevations are characteristically transient. In other words, state anxiety fluctuates over time and changes in intensity depending on the occurrence of particular anxiety-evoking stimuli (Spielberger, 1983; MacIntyre, 1988). Measures of State anxiety are derived from a subject's response to a present situation. Consequently, to evaluate how individuals feel in the present, Spielberger has devised the *State Anxiety Scale* which quantitatively assesses the participant's present emotional state.

Situation-Specific Anxiety

Like State anxiety, situation-specific anxiety is postulated to be found isolated within a specific context. In addition, it is similar to trait anxiety in that it is presumed over time to be unwavering; however, only when one is present in the specific anxiety-provoking context is situation-specific anxiety found to be unwavering. Therefore, scales used to measure situation-specific anxiety constitute components of Trait and State measures (MacIntyre, 1988). Several scales that measure situation-specific anxiety have been devised. These include Daly's *Writing anxiety* (1970), Tobias' *Math anxiety* (1978), McCroskey's *Communication*

Apprehension (1970), and Sarason and Mandler's *Test anxiety* (1952). Gardner (1985) devised the *French Class anxiety scale* and *French Use anxiety scale*, both of which inherently frame foreign language anxiety as a situation-specific anxiety. MacIntyre concludes that foreign language anxiety should be determined a situation specific anxiety.

Combining State and Trait Constructs

Even though some researchers conclude that a meaningful distinction lies between Trait and State anxiety, MacIntyre (1988) points out that it may be more advantageous to combine the State and Trait anxiety constructs. He cites Chrisjohn's (1981) conclusion that there is an unspecific foundation for the distinction between the two constructs both through empirical research and in theoretical construct. First, MacIntyre deliberates on the empirical evidence that supports the idea that a distinction should not exist (the high correlation between Spielberger's (1983) *State and Trait Anxiety Scales* are one piece of evidence). Also, since both scales measure the participant's anxiety without determining the specific source of this anxiety, he points to a plausible argument that the conceptual distinction between the State anxiety scale and the Trait anxiety scale lies mainly on the differences between the points of time indicated to the respondents during the test. As a result, the differences in the instructions given to the respondents of the two scales are not notable enough to carry a distinction between the two

constructs since both constructs pertain to a general form of anxiety which can be credited to any cause (MacIntyre). Interestingly, MacIntyre's argument illustrates the elusive nature of anxiety by pointing out that the conceptual differences drawn to label and understand the complexity of anxiety may be tenuous and arbitrary distinctions themselves.

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Student responses to two *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS) items support the idea "that foreign language anxiety is a distinct set of beliefs, perceptions, and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom and not merely a composite of other anxieties" (Horwitz et al., 1991, p.34). The FLCAS (Horwitz, 1983) was developed at a foreign language workshop at the University of Texas, and set up for students who experienced anxiety from their foreign language classes. Pilot testing of the FLCAS with introductory Spanish students at the University of Texas revealed that debilitating foreign language anxiety was identifiable and that the students who suffered from foreign language anxiety tended to have similar characteristics (Horwitz et al.).

The characteristics described by the results of the administered FLCAS are fears linked to: speaking in the foreign language; not being able to understand all foreign

language input; and negative evaluation from peers as a result of foreign language incompetence. In addition, making mistakes and consequent error corrections are perceived by foreign language-anxious students as failure (Horwitz et al., 1991). Such characteristics are debilitating, and tend to discourage the student in his or her pursuit of a foreign language. However, not all anxiety appears to be debilitating.

Anxiety Specific to a Debilitating Effect

A focus on anxiety specific to a debilitating or facilitating effect in an academic environment has been a part of the anxiety literature since Albert and Haber (1960) reviewed the use of general versus specific anxiety scales to measure the predictability of academic scores from an anxiety measure. While anxiety has been found to be academically facilitative (Albert & Haber, 1960), it can have detrimental effects on academic achievement and lead to academic failure (Bailey, 1983; Gaudry & Spielberger, 1971; Spielberger, 1962; Tobias & Hedl, 1972). Krashen hypothesizes that anxiety can have a positive effect on conscious language learning, but that subconscious language acquisition occurs best when there is no anxiety (Young, 1992). Terrell does not agree with Krashen that acquisition is automatic with the right input and no anxiety to filter the input. Rather, Terrell believes

that the learner can have anxiety, or "blocks" and still acquire the language if the language learner has a positive drive to learn the language based on communicative need and a strong motivation for identification or assimilation with the target language's native speakers (Young, 1992). Nevertheless, foreign language anxiety, specifically that which is experienced in the classroom, can prove to be detrimental to the language learning process (Horwitz et al., 1991).

Studies on the impact of foreign language anxiety have offered only ambiguity when the findings are compared and contrasted (Horwitz et al., 1986; Scovel, 1978). In his review of anxiety research, Scovel discusses several of these studies that reveal conflicting findings on correlates of anxiety in an attempt to identify the discordant forces on the approaches taken to these studies.

The research into the relationship of anxiety to foreign language learning has provided mixed and confusing results, immediately suggesting that anxiety itself is neither a simple nor well-understood psychological construct and that it is perhaps premature to attempt to relate it to the global and comprehensive task of language acquisition. (Scovel, 1978, p.2)

He advises that it is important to consider differentiating between types of anxiety (i.e. facilitative and debilitating anxiety) to explain the inconsistency and contradiction in foreign language anxiety research. He cites the research on avoidance behavior by Kleinmann (1977) that considers the possibility of anxiety being "facilitating," encouraging

language learners to use constructions that they normally would tend to avoid because these constructions are not found in their native tongue. The specification of an anxiety that is facilitating in language learning supports research findings that indicate anxiety may have positive or productive results (i.e. increased proficiency, high scores on academic tests, use of higher order or unfamiliar constructions and working effectively under pressure). Differentiating the experience of anxiety that is debilitating from that which is facilitating may provide a means of interpreting findings that reveal inconsistencies in foreign language anxiety and learning research.

Anxiety and Competitiveness

In her review of 10 diary studies, Bailey (1983) looked at competitiveness and its relationship with anxiety. All of the diaries examined were written in English by adult native speakers of English, eight of whom are language teachers. She found particular characteristics that involve competitiveness in these diaries such as

- 1) Overt self comparison of the language learn...with classmates...; with other learners not in the classroom...; and with personal expectations.
- 2) Emotive responses to the comparisons...including... hostile reactions toward other students...; and connotative uses of language in the diary...which reveal the diarist's emotional state.
- 3) A desire to out-do other language learners... including...racing through examinations and...shouting answers in class...

4) Emphasis on or concern with tests or grades...especially with reference to other students...or...with a discussion of how tests interfere with language learning...; although...one "unanxious" student...documents a notable lack of concern with tests and grades.

5) A desire to gain the teacher's approval...including...perception of the teacher as a parent figure...; and...the need to meet or overcome a teacher's expectations.

6) Anxiety experienced during the language lesson.

7) Withdrawal from the language-learning experience...which can either...mental...or physical...; and...temporary...or permanent...; one diarist...wanted to withdraw temporarily but continued to attend the language class. (Bailey, 1983, pp.93-4)

Although she questioned whether or not these findings can be generalized since they were produced by a qualitative design, Bailey (1983) posits a hypothesis of competitiveness and its relationship with anxiety. This hypothesis states "that Language Classroom Anxiety can be caused and/or aggravated by the learner's competitiveness when he sees himself as less proficient than the object of comparison" (Bailey, p.96). She continues, describing anxiety as a possible cause of a type of competitiveness that increases language learning efforts as well. Further, Bailey proposes a corollary to her hypothesis stating that as the language learner perceives more competency and is, therefore, better able to compete, the less anxiety the learner will experience. Consequently, she recognizes anxiety as either facilitating and, therefore, motivating, or debilitating, causing possible withdrawal from the language classroom (Bailey).

Further Psychological Considerations

The experience of anxiety cannot be divorced from other psychological considerations such as self-esteem, inhibition, ego-boundaries (Guiora, Beit-Hallahmi, Brannon, Dull, & Scovel, 1972) and risk-taking. Because these psychological factors are an inherent part of learning a foreign language, anxiety assumes an important role in the affective aspect of learning a foreign language (Brown, 1987). Kogan and Wallach (1967) have extensively discussed the role of personal characteristics and situational influences in risk-taking. Beebe (1983) cites their work, focusing on the relationship of risk-taking with foreign language learning.

Risk-taking

As an inherent part of foreign language usage, risk-taking is bound to facilitate some experience of anxiety (Beebe, 1983). Risk-taking involves a choice between options where the outcome is uncertain and where a particular choice may result in failure (Beebe; Kogan & Wallach, 1967). High risk-takers are intuitively the least likely to experience anxiety.

Even so, according to Kogan and Wallace (1967) and Beebe (1983), those individuals who are highly motivated to achieve are not high risk-takers, but moderate ones. "These individuals like to be in control and like to depend on skill. They do not take wild, frivolous risks or enter into

no-win situations. They also shy away from low-risk situations" (Beebe, p.41). This position suggests a parallel relationship along the continuum of high to low risk-takers with the continuum of low to high anxiousness respectively. Following this continuum, those who are more moderate risk-takers experience more anxiety than high risk-takers. Such logic supports any supposition that the anxiety experienced by moderate risk-takers may facilitate learning.

Pursuing this logic, low risk-takers, characterized by those who remain quiet or nonparticipatory in class, follow the strictest guidelines to grammar usage, do not creatively use or test their foreign language in composition and dialogue, and are likely to experience anxiety that debilitates their learning. Further, a lack of anxiety could lead to underachievement as well. Pimsleur, Sunland, and McIntyre (1964) suggest that not only could an "under-achiever" in foreign language be so tense that he/she experiences a block that leads to poor performance, but also, the learner may have such low anxiety that he/she reflects an unconcerned, uncommitted attitude toward learning the foreign language in the first place.

The Monitor Model, based on the Monitor Theory of adult second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981), provides a theoretical framework from which these debilitating characteristics of a low risk-taker could be viewed. The Monitor Theory presupposes that subconscious language

acquisition and conscious language learning are two independent systems of L2 development in adults. With reference to the Monitor Model, which maintains that conscious learning is only usable as a monitor to the learner, the debilitating characteristics described above are typical of what he describes as a monitor overuser, a learner concerned with the strictest use of grammatical rules and correct foreign language production (Beebe, 1983; Krashen). Nevertheless, Krashen (1980, 1981) identifies certain conditions that must be present for the use of the Monitor. According to Krashen, the language learner must have time, must be focused on form, and must have knowledge of the rule.

Another approach to understanding risk-taking is through the locus of control construct. Beebe (1983) discusses the locus of control construct, first introduced by Rotter (1966), as an seemingly stable personality variable with relationship to language learning and risk-taking. (Locus of control refers to the belief one has of the source of control of events.) This source can be perceived either as an internal, self-controlled view where one perceives that one has impact on events or an external, outside of self-controlled view, where one does not perceive one has impact on events (Beebe; Kogan & Wallach, 1967). Beebe proffers Joe's (1971) presentation of two pairs of studies that reveal evidence for opposing relationships between locus of control and risk-taking. One pair of studies suggests that those

participants with an internal locus tend to be more conservative in risk-taking and the other pair of studies proposes the opposite. A third pair of studies that Joe presents reveals no evidence of a significant relationship between locus of control and risk-taking. Despite the contradictory evidence, Joe maintains that the evidence largely leans toward the idea that those with an internal locus are more conservative risk-takers. Even so, there are other variables to consider, such as self-esteem, which appear to play a role in risk-taking behavior.

The Role of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem plays an integral part in risk-taking. Much of this part played remains an enigma, however, since some of this relationship can be only intuitively assessed. Those with high self-esteem are likely to take some risks which will facilitate learning a foreign language. McCroskey and Daly (1984) found a positive association between self-esteem and academic achievement. Although many characteristics have been found to correlate to communication apprehension, low self-esteem shows a strong concurrence with oral communication apprehension (Daly, 1991). Even so, Price (1988) found self-esteem was not a significant factor in foreign language anxiety. However, low self-esteem may be manifested not only in low risk-taking behavior, in individuals who do not wish to draw attention to themselves, but also, in high risk-taking behavior, in individuals who

desire much attention. Self-esteem is one variable among several that affect an individual's behavior, making the measure of self-esteem alone an incomplete measure of risk-taking behavior.

Ego-boundaries and Inhibition

Guiora et al. (1972) suggested that the difficulties that adults experience with language learning may be due to the "language ego." The language ego describes the language identity of a person which has evolved from the simultaneous development of the native speaker's L1 and his/her development of ego. One's self-identity is solidly tied to one's developed first language as a communicative tool which facilitates a further shaping of one's identity through sending and receiving messages. As one goes through puberty, the language ego becomes more defensive in order to protect the individual from the physical and emotional changes that are taking place. The young adult has a fragile ego as a result, which solidifies the self with the safety of the L1 of the individual (Brown, 1987).

Consequently, adults' self-identity is threatened when they attempt to interact in a foreign language because their self-identity is so secure with the L1. Inhibitions serve to protect this self-identity, and attempting a shift of this identity to another language is possible if one is able to overcome foreign language inhibitions (Brown, 1987; Guiora et al., 1972).

One study in particular addresses the relationship between inhibition and L2 learning. Using small amounts of alcohol, Guiora et al. (1972) aimed to lower the inhibitions of an experimental group of language learners, testing the groups' pronunciation of the Thai language and comparing the findings to a control group. A significant difference was found between the experimental groups which led Guiora to conclude that pronunciation ability in a second language and inhibition may have a direct relationship. The pronunciation performance of those subjects who had ingested alcohol was found to be better than the control group's pronunciation (Guiora et al., 1972).

Brown (1987) points out some potential problems with Guiora's findings. Brown considers that the alcohol's physical effect of lowering muscular tension may have been a significant influence on the pronunciation performance of the experimental group. Also, he suggests that pronunciation may not be a good indicator of language competence (Brown, 1987). Even so, Guiora et al. (1972) provided some insight into the relationship of inhibition, attributed to ego boundaries, and L2 learning, paving the way for further research in this area of psychology and L2 language learning.

Communication Anxiety

Whereas anxiety and stress have been traits or

characteristics found to interfere with a person's effectiveness in communicating (Gynther, 1957), communication anxiety has been described as an uneasiness or apprehension to communicate as the source of anxiety (McCroskey, 1977b, 1984a, 1984b). Being a necessary component in meaningful negotiation of information which leads to applied and extended learning and, therefore, impacting achievement (McCroskey, 1977a), communication is often lacking in the language classroom because students may be communicatively apprehensive (Lucas, 1984). If attempting to communicate ideas or information in one's native tongue provokes communication apprehension, then attempts made to communicate in a foreign language are likely to intensify such apprehension, affecting foreign language speech proficiency. Teachers in the classroom tend to value classroom participation and are inclined to hold students who communicate well in higher regard than those who remain reticent and, therefore non-participatory (Daly, 1991). Just as some people become anxious about communicating with others in supervisory positions over them (Richmond and McCroskey, 1985), some students may be threatened by verbal interaction with teachers who are often seen as authority figures in the foreign language classroom. If a student suffers from some form of communication anxiety before entering the classroom, the participation required from foreign language coursework is bound to increase the anxiousness of the student and to

contribute to a sense of foreign language anxiety.

Young (1985), in her doctoral dissertation, analyzed the relationship between anxiety and oral performance in foreign language. Specifically, she investigated how the scores on the *Oral Proficiency Interview* (OPI) were affected by anxiety. The 60 participants of the study comprised both French, German, or Spanish majors and prospective teachers of these languages. Her findings indicate that the participants did not have very high levels of anxiety as a result of taking the OPI and that once the effects of ability were accounted for, anxiety did not have as much of an impact on the oral proficiency scores as did the language ability of the students taking the OPI. Even so, she cautioned that the participants taking the OPI were apprised that the OPI administered for the study was not an official test and, perhaps, they were not highly anxious as a result of this knowledge. It is conceivable that the participants may not have experienced the level of anxiety that would be induced by an official administration of the OPI (Young).

Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety

The learning environment in which a language learner is placed can have relative impact on the anxiety experienced by the learner. The environments in which a foreign language can be learned or acquired are identified as formal and informal

learning environments (Krashen, 1976). Formal learning environments, those settings in which the formal rules of a language are taught and emphasized for conscious learning, tend to be academic settings where an emphasis is placed on achievement measured by testing. The literature on the impact of test anxiety alone is immense (Gaudry & Fitzgerald, 1971; Osterhouse, 1975; Tobias & Hedl, 1972) and researchers continue to consider its relationship with foreign language learning and assessment. Test anxiety appears to be based on a fear of failure inherent in a type of performance anxiety (Gordon & Sarason, 1955). One important study proposes a negative impact of test anxiety on English as a second language (ESL) learners. In her unpublished master's thesis which examined the effect of test anxiety on non-university ESL students, Murray (1985) concluded that low anxiety students tend to perform better on examinations than highly anxious students. Concerns of students that impacted test anxiety were item difficulty, test familiarity, and time limitations (Murray).

Also present in the formal or classroom setting is the teacher, who brings his/her own set of expectations of how students should perform and how to facilitate student learning. Since students have their own expectations and beliefs about approaches to language learning (Horwitz, 1988), a clash of expectations between students and teachers is a prospect to be examined since such divergence can lead

to a student's sense of diminishing confidence and satisfaction in the foreign language (Horwitz) which may further facilitate an increase in anxiety experienced in the classroom. Other variables to include are a concern with negative peer evaluation, (Horowitz et al., 1991), attitudes, aptitude and achievement (Trylong, 1987), and oral performance (Young, 1991), among others.

Are students sensitized to be foreign language anxious? Beliefs about foreign language learning seem to be related to the experience of foreign language anxiety, yet procuring an understanding of this relationship remains a difficult task. In order to begin to unveil this mystery, the beliefs of foreign language learners have to be identified. Horwitz (1988) developed a means of assessing students' beliefs about foreign language learning. The *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI) identifies five dimensions: 1) learning difficulty; 2) aptitude for foreign language learning; 3) the nature of language learning; 4) communication and learning strategies; 5) expectations and motivations (Horwitz). Such beliefs hold significant ramifications for the way students respond and adapt to foreign language study and may contribute to their experience of anxiety. For example, Horwitz posits that students who believe that there are people who are less apt to learn a second language will have negative expectations about their own ability of language learning especially if they perceive

themselves as those who fit this category of language learners.

Unrealistic expectations are often based on how students perceive language learning. In particular, Horwitz (1988) points out the unrealistic expectation concerning the amount of time necessary to learn a foreign language. Many students perceive that it takes much less time to become proficient in a foreign language than it actually does. When the student is confronted with the reality of the struggle and the amount of time actually necessary for foreign language proficiency, he or she is bound to experience frustration, questioning his/her own ability, intelligence, or purpose of study which, in turn, could create anxiety. This type of anxiety may be different than the type of anxiety produced by the actual attempt to communicate or produce the foreign language targeted. How these beliefs create or impact foreign language anxiety remains uncertain and, therefore, a subject worthy of focus if foreign language anxiety is to be understood in its complexity.

Foreign Language Anxiety and Learner Variables

Using correlational analysis in her doctoral dissertation, Price (1988) examined the relationship between selected learner characteristics and foreign language anxiety. Those characteristics selected included foreign

language aptitude and self-evaluations of foreign language aptitude, test anxiety, self-esteem, and public speaking anxiety. Price cites Horowitz's (1986) conclusion that communication anxiety, trait anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation were learner characteristics that had not demonstrated a significant connection to foreign language anxiety. Therefore, these were not selected. Secondly, her study included use of Horwitz's *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* and three measures of achievement for a re-evaluation of the anxiety-achievement relationship. Lastly, a profile of a highly anxious language learner was established from a comparison of the high and low anxiety groups (p.99).

The findings of Price's (1988) study suggest that prediction of foreign language anxiety is possible with some learner characteristics, and self-confidence and test anxiety were found to be the strongest predictors (Price). Test anxiety and public speaking anxiety showed a positive correlation with foreign language anxiety while foreign language aptitude and self-ratings of aptitude showed a negative correlation. Self-esteem did not prove to be a significant factor in determining foreign language anxiety (Price). Even so, Price concluded that the prediction of anxiety remains complex, with the experience of foreign language anxiety being affected by several factors, and that any foreign language model would have to reflect that complexity. The highly anxious student bears a combination of

attributes that carry on simultaneously, leading to the experience of anxiety. Further, her findings indicate that anxiety is likely to impair foreign language performance in some situations and is more likely to impair oral performance over other kinds of performance measures.

Overcoming Foreign Language Anxiety

Along with teaching methodologies that focus on reducing anxiety to enhance learning such as Asher's (1982) Total Physical Response Method, Curran's (1976) Community Language Learning, and Lozanov's (1982) Suggestopedia, techniques that focus on reducing anxiety directly have been suggested. McCoy (1979) identified some anxiety-causing factors in two groups of second language learners, college-level first-year Spanish students and elementary school teachers attending a bilingual training institute. The anxiety-provoking factors that he found led to the identification of three techniques which can be applied to overcome the anxieties of students learning a second language. These are: 1) systematic desensitization; 2) cognitive restructuring; and 3) modeling and guided participation.

The goal of systematic desensitization is to have the student overcome a sense of impending failure and develop a positive reaction to an anxiety-causing situation. This technique works well with students prone to debilitating

anxiety associated with public speaking (McCoy, 1979). Cognitive restructuring is used to generate awareness of verbal and nonverbal behavior and to cognitively restructure anticipation of failure, inability to learn, and peer insolence. The emphasis of this technique is on the modeling and reinforcing of constructive verbalizations, an alternative to verbalizations that are anxiety causing and self-defeating (McCoy). The goal of the techniques of modeling and guided participation are both modeling the activities of a successful performance and guiding the student through a successful performance through encouragement and physical assistance performing graded subtasks of increasing difficulty (McCoy).

Before beginning their intensive foreign language program at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, California, students participate in a three hour "Foreign Language Anxiety Workshop" designed by Campbell and Ortiz (1987) to prepare them psychologically for intensive foreign language learning. The workshop has six dimensions which include participation in the following:

- 1) An attitudinal survey constructed by Campbell and Ortiz (1987). The Survey of Attitudes Specific to the Foreign Language Classroom SASFLC was administered several times throughout the language learning program assessing the students' foreign language anxiety and their beliefs about foreign language learning.
- 2) Discussion titled "The Myths and the Realities of Foreign Language Learning" based on Paul Pimsleur's work *How to Learn a Foreign Language* (1980).
- 3) Develop learning strategies specific to foreign language study.

- 4) Exercise for confidence development.
- 5) Exercise for learning to cope with frustration.
- 6) Discussion of the ideal language learner (Campbell & Ortiz, 1987).

In addition to the individual rewards gained by each participant, the workshop generates a shift in the students' perception of their foreign language learning peers from a group of seemingly dissimilar individuals to a cohesive language learning community (Campbell & Ortiz, 1987).

Another suggestion for overcoming foreign language anxiety has been to use dialogue journals as a means of communication between individual students and the language instructor (Popkin, 1985). Journals allow a self-expression in the foreign language that students are often not given the opportunity develop. These journals also facilitate better personal communication between the student and instructor which enhances their mutual understanding. Even though vocabulary is limited and sentence structures are simple, the development of self expression is rewarding because it is meaningful (Popkin). Since the emphasis is not on error correction, the instructor's role is to comment on the ideas expressed in the journal in the foreign language with minimal error correction. Toleration of the student's mistakes is crucial for the student to develop self expression without self doubt which has a debilitating effect (Popkin).

Summary

As discussed in the Introduction, foreign language anxiety can be conceived as a specific type of anxiety or the manifestation of other types of anxieties in the foreign language classroom. From Chapter Two's review of the literature, we find that foreign language anxiety may be related to communication anxiety and, further, be a manifestation of a trait, state, or situation-specific anxiety. The research probing whether anxiety is facilitative or debilitative and its impact on language learning is inconclusive, although it is believed that a low level of anxiety while learning a foreign language is optimal for learning.

The literature reviewed in this chapter included research offering some insight into anxiety's role in foreign language learning. This discussion presented anxiety concerned with test-taking, communication, and psychological considerations such as self-esteem, inhibition and risk-taking. The majority of the research presented has been quantitative, however, focusing on the results of anxiety scales. Little has been done by means of qualitative design.

Conclusion

Even though recent research has begun to shape our

understanding of foreign language anxiety, a full picture of this phenomenon remains to be notably sketched through qualitative inquiry. By approaching a study of a few foreign language-anxious students with in-depth interviews on their experience of their anxiety, a more saturated portrayal of foreign language anxiety may be conceived since there is no attempt to pilot or manipulate possible characteristics of the phenomenon. Instead, the characteristics that emerge from the data will guide the researcher's approach to data analysis and shape her conclusions.

As stated in Chapter One, this research study is qualitative in its approach to the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety. Drawing on the perceptions of university students taking level 1 and level 2 foreign language classes; this study examines what foreign language learning means to these students; how closely tied they feel to the process of language learning; how they see themselves amongst their foreign language peers and teachers; how they view themselves as students in general; and how they perceive and interact with the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study including the research design, participants, procedures for data collection, and data analysis. The objectives of this qualitative research study were (1) to identify the anxiety experienced by level 1 (first year) and level 2 (second year) foreign language learners while learning a second language, using the learners' description and perception of anxiety; (2) to identify, from the learners' point of view, the possible causes of and adaptation to foreign language learning anxiety; and (3) to identify, from the learners' perspectives, the effects of foreign language learning anxiety on foreign language learners.

Research Design

The strength of this study lies in the understanding it brings of the experience of language learners. This understanding can be discovered through the qualitative design of this study. Certainly, the issue of foreign language anxiety has been discussed in the literature on language anxiety (as presented in Chapter Two of this study),

but most of the research designs have been quantitative. Foreign language anxiety, as it has been presented in the literature, appears to be a complex phenomenon, and qualitative research which affirms the complexity involved with any phenomena (Peshkin, 1992), is a advantageous step in understanding this complexity. Gaining a phenomenologically-based interpretation, that is an interpretation of a phenomenon based on the perceptions of those who have experienced the phenomenon, has some advantages. By applying a phenomenologically-based interpretation of the experience of the foreign language learner to pedagogical considerations, the needs of the foreign language learner are more apt to be met with appropriate pedagogy and further research on the subject.

The phenomenon of foreign language anxiety is the focus of this study. With any attempt to understand foreign language anxiety, the perceptions of the foreign language students should be considered. Thus, this study is guided by the need for a clear understanding of both the perceptions of students in a foreign language classroom and the influential forces that guide these perceptions. The qualitative nature of this study provides a "window" into foreign language anxiety by gaining the perspectives of those who experience such anxiety first hand. Although self-reporting can be biased since students may not wish to recognize their own negative traits in terms of psychological, cultural, and

academic assessments (Koch & Terrell, 1991), foreign language anxious students remain as a valuable source of information about foreign language anxiety. Their voices must be heard before any process of comprehensive understanding can begin.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What are students' beliefs about language learning that lead to anxiety about foreign language study?
 - a) What are students' perceptions about language learning?
 - b) How do students assess their own process of language learning?
- 2) What are students' perceptions about anxiety?
- 3) What are students' perceptions about anxiety in relationship to language learning in a university classroom?

Participants

The participants in this study were two first-year Spanish students and four second-year French students from a southeastern public university. These students were selected based on their responses to a distributed questionnaire (Appendix B) on foreign language anxiety and brief oral biographical interviews. The researcher used the following

criteria for selecting the participants: The student: 1) had to be in a first or second year French or Spanish language course as an undergraduate; 2) could not be pursuing an undergraduate degree in a foreign language; 3) had to have expressed having experienced anxiety in the course of his or her foreign language study in the college classroom; and 3) had to have French or Spanish as the first language that he/she continued to study or planned to continue to study. (In other words, the participant may have made a false start, having begun another foreign language course, but did not continue this course of language study.) The participants were found willing to give of their valuable time to share their perceptions about the experience of foreign language anxiety in a university foreign language classroom.

The participants in the study were three males, one African-American and two European-American, and three females, all European-American. The ages ranged from 21 years of age to 29 years of age. Three students were considered nontraditional students since they were returning to the university after having taken time off from their university environment to pursue jobs, travel, and in one case, to care for a child. Only one of the participants was married.

Methods and Procedures

Gaining Access and Consent

Contacts with the participants (identified through questionnaires distributed in class), were made in the third week of the summer and fall semesters of 1993 after obtaining permission from The University of Tennessee, Human Subjects Committee of 1993 (Appendix A). After several weeks of L2 study, students were familiar enough with the class structure, materials used and the instructor to have settled into a particular routine of study and know to some degree, what was expected of them as students of these classes. Hence, the students who were most apt to experience anxiety in their foreign language study have probably done so by this time and had some experience to share as participants in this study. The French and Spanish graduate teaching assistants at The University of Tennessee who were interested in the study aided the process of making contacts with the students by distributing the questionnaires, collecting the responses in their classrooms, and passing them on to the researcher for consideration.

The distributed questionnaire (Appendix B) provided a means for the researcher to identify potential participants in this study. The questionnaire solicited information about both the respondents' history concerning their study of a foreign language and their experience of anxiety involved in

their foreign language study. Those students who met the criteria stated above and expressed interest in participating in the study, were contacted and brief oral biographical interviews were conducted by the researcher. The biographical interviews were questions pertaining to age, year in college, major field of study, and intention of foreign language study. Of the students contacted, six were identified as having experienced foreign language anxiety and were, therefore, considered to be qualified subjects for this study since they met selection criteria.

Written consent forms (Appendix C) were obtained from each student individually before the audio-cassette recorded interviews were conducted. All consent forms, audio-tapes, handwritten notes and transcripts were locked under file as is required by federal regulations and The University of Tennessee Research with Human Subjects Guidelines. After three years, the audio-tapes, handwritten notes, and transcripts will be destroyed by the researcher.

The audio-tapes were necessary to obtain an accurate record of the responses from the interviews and were useful in capturing the participants' tone and inflection which gave additional meaning to their responses.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and each student was made aware that he or she could refuse to participate or withdraw from the interview at anytime without penalty. To maintain anonymity, the names of the participants

were changed for the written presentation of their voluntary contributions to this study and their involvement with this research in general.

Data Collection

Each student took part in the study by answering open-ended questions in a single interview (Appendix D) with the researcher. The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants, after morning classes and in the evenings, in locations suitable to the participants. The interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed by the researcher to ease the process of data analysis. The interview times varied with one interview lasting approximately 30 minutes, two interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes, two interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes, and one lasting 75 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using an inductive process. In other words, by looking at the particular characteristics and descriptions of anxiety and other aspects of language learning, generalizations were formed. Specifically, the inductive analysis of the data gave rise to categories which were coded. The categories fell into identifiable patterns and the relationships between these patterns were considered as themes of the data. Such themes could be further considered as possible hypotheses for further research. This process of analysis was conducted following the guidance

provided by Dr. Kathleen Bennett deMarrais and the books by Glense and Peshkin (1992), Wolcott (1990), and Van Manen (1990) that focus on a qualitative research paradigm.

Summary

In summary, the following research methods and procedures were used: 1) the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety was chosen as the focus of this study; 2) participants were identified through the use of consent forms and biographical interviews; 3) the participants were interviewed using an interview schedule developed from a review of the literature on the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety; 4) the interviews were transcribed for data analysis; 5) the transcribed interviews were read for meaning units, or categories, that gave rise to themes in the data; 6) portraits of each of the participants were drawn to characterize and conceive of each participant as a language learner (presented in Chapter Four); 7) a thematic structure evolved from the rising themes that provided the findings for the study. These findings will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

Portraits

Chapter Four presents the portraits of the participants in the study. Each portrait is based on the data given in the initial biographical interviews as well as the open-ended interviews which are the basis of this study. These portraits describe each participant as a foreign language learner and provide a means of identifying some of the similarities and the differences in these participants as a group.

Each portrait includes an introduction of each participant as a university student and provides some personal characteristics based on the researcher's impression of each participant's conversation/interaction style and mode of expression. Furthermore, each description provides details based on each participant's perception of his/her language learning attitude and motivation, language learning anxiety and frustration, and other personal issues that involve foreign language learning.

Portrait of Susan

Susan's Introduction

Susan is a European-American, 26 year-old nontraditional student, returning to the university to complete a Bachelors

degree after several years away from the university environment. She took time off to travel to France, to raise her five year-old daughter, and to figure out who she is and what she wants to do for a career. Having decided that her interest is film making, she's back in school pursuing a, yet, unspecified Arts and Sciences degree that will eventually lead to a film-making career.

Susan is not only reflective in her conversational style but also has a wonderful sense of humor. She demonstrated her ability to laugh at herself throughout the interview in her narration of particular circumstances. This sense of humor, along with her pragmatic approach toward self-understanding, gives an impression of her continuing effort towards self-reflection and some consummate self-knowledge.

She claims that being an older student in her undergraduate French class gives her a sense of having "some sage." In other words, she regards herself as wiser than her peers which gives her some advantage. Not only does she not have the same concerns as the younger students in her French class, but she also has greater appreciation of the education she is receiving. She expresses a sense of self-confidence as a result of this perspective, but at the same time, she feels like an outsider. Perhaps it is this sense of having some sage which feeds her ability to make light of herself in her descriptions of particular anxiety-ridden circumstances in which she's been involved.

Susan's Attitude toward Learning French

Susan gets irritated by attitudes of English "superiority" and feels that people should "better" themselves by doing what they can to communicate with others, including learning a foreign language. Susan loves French and wants to speak it proficiently. She doesn't think French is as useful as other foreign languages, "like Spanish would be the most," but her passion for French has survived since the second grade, when she gained a little bit of exposure to the language from a French record her teacher gave her. She sees French as a very romantic language, and has "always loved France and the idea of Paris...I wanted to be an artist, go to Paris and live in a garret."

Susan's early exposure to French and her aspiration to be sophisticated motivated her to begin her studies in high school. She found high school French to be easy, always making good grades, despite the difficulties her friends were having. "I was very flip about it. I didn't think that I was learning that much because it seemed so easy to me." Even though Susan didn't feel she was learning much French, she now sees that the basic classes that she had in high school had more impact and are now more important than she had considered them to have been at the time. She is currently "plunging into intermediate French after being away from French for eight years."

Susan's Experience with Anxiety

Susan's success with high school French led her to participate in a statewide competition where she has her first memory of foreign language anxiety. Susan believes the competition led to stress she had not experienced in the classroom because she knew she would be competing with people who knew French very well. She feels that this experience was different from her classroom experience in high school where she felt she could "speak it better than anybody." Even now, eight years later, Susan is in a university setting studying second year French and feels she's doing "as well, if not better, than a lot of people in the class."

Susan feels very self-conscious being with people who can actually speak the language. She has a younger sister who lives in France and is proficient in French. She claims to be intimidated by her sister's proficiency and has a hard time speaking French to her. As a result, she has a tendency to make fun of her own pronunciation of French to her sister because she is afraid that she will not pronounce it correctly anyway. Since her sister will not "cut [her] any slack," Susan feels more self-conscious speaking French to her sister than to her French teacher. She knows that her French teacher will make allowances for her. She suggests that her sister may make allowances, but Susan always senses being laughed at by her as well.

Most of Susan's anxiety is experienced out of class. In class, she feels confident and accomplished, "a real sense of achievement." She has an A- average and believes that her pronunciation is very good. Even though Susan thinks that her teacher is easy, liberal in grading, and likes her in general, she sees her French class as her most difficult. The positive reinforcement that she receives from her good grades, her French teacher and her peers feeds her awareness of achievement. However, because French is her "most difficult class," she has a lot of anxiety from wanting to do well.

Feeling like an Impostor

Although sometimes she feels like she's earned them, Susan does not always understand her good grades and lacks confidence in her foreign language abilities. Susan believes that some of this lack of confidence comes from her sense of not applying herself to her French studies. Having always "had a pretty easy ride" academically, she tends not to work as hard as she feels she should, and she suffers anxiety as a result. Further, her experience of success does not assuage her stress. She only feels like an impostor when she does well without having worked at it.

Along with a need to apply herself more to her study of French, Susan also professes an ignorance of French, knowing that she has a "long way to go." As a result, she justifies her good grades by claiming her teacher is "really easy." A

notable combination of her experience of success with awareness of her ignorance and the stress she feels with learning the language encourages her sense of being an impostor.

Further, Susan finds that she has an easier time justifying her success in other classes because she sees her knowledge of French differently than her knowledge of the subjects in the other classes in which she does well. She claims that she cannot enjoy her success in French class like she can in other classes because the class means more than just a grade. Even so, she continues to worry about how she's doing because she wants to maintain her high average in her French class, and she feels less certain that she can do this in her French class than her other required classes.

A Need to be in Control

Being out of control of a situation makes Susan uncomfortable. Although she doesn't see herself as a "real structured person," she doesn't "like to be caught off guard." Being prepared for a situation ahead of time is one way that Susan is able to feel in control. She likes a structured environment where she knows what to expect. When she must deal with her anxiety speaking French in class and other contexts, she tries to bring the situation "back to a familiar point" which often means resorting to using English. Another way Susan gains control, or brings the situation "back to a comfortable place," is by trying to formulate what

she is going to say in English and translating it before she says it in French.

I feel most comfortable speaking the foreign language when I already know what to expect. In a very structured environment, I feel very comfortable, but if I'm just going to have to fly by the seat of my pants, I get very nervous about it.

Despite the possible difficulties Susan foresees in continuing French, such as having a more difficult teacher and maintaining high grades, she definitely wants to continue "as long as she can." After all, her goal is proficiency in French, and she seems to have maintained a sense of romance with the language even through her language struggles.

Portrait of Jake

Jake's Introduction

Jake is a 29 year-old African-American, a nontraditional student who is back in school to finish his Bachelors degree in Arts and Sciences. His current interests lie in Communication and Geography, but he has not decided on a focus for his degree. While away from the university, Jake worked and traveled. He spent six months in Europe traveling to England, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Austria and found himself frustrated with the fact that he could not speak to Europeans in their native tongues. He strongly values communication and feels that he missed out on a lot during his travels by not knowing a second language.

Jake addresses issues on a very personal level. He describes himself to be somewhat shy and his demeanor is very calm and easy going. Even so, he turned out to be very talkative, once asked to share his views, and quite full of interesting insights indicative of intense personal reflection and introspection. His intensity reflects some focused and generated personal growth. Furthermore, he seems to enjoy expressing himself, sharing his insights. He commented after the interview that he thought his participation in this study helped him reduce some of his anxiety because it allowed him to look at himself and understand his experience of anxiety.

Jake sees himself as an adventurous and involved person. He pursues situations that are new and challenging, and he makes references to his trip to Europe to illustrate this side of his character. He feels that his improvisational skills enable him to go into an unfamiliar environment, which puts him in a vulnerable position, and makes the environment familiar and the experience positive. He likes to seek out and experience diversity, seemingly, to find himself in its midst.

At this stage in his life, Jake finds communication to be very important to him. He says that its important for him to not only being in touch with himself, but also trying to be in touch with people, and especially people that are close to him. Further, communication across cultures is important

to Jake, so he views knowing a second language as an obvious advantage. In fact, he would like to communicate in another language as well as he does in English.

Jake's Attitude toward Learning Spanish

Inspired by his experience in Europe and his frustration at not being able communicate on a personal level, Jake wants to incorporate Spanish into his every day life so that it becomes customary, like English. If he had some friends that spoke Spanish, he feels that it could be a part of his everyday routine. Being a consistently self-aware, Jake has tried to set his expectations and goals at an attainable level. Yet, at the same time, he recognizes that he has instilled within himself some higher expectations which involve truly wanting to communicate with his friends in Spanish. This is not happening as quickly as he would like it to be. By being persistent with the language, however, he maintains the belief that he will learn to speak Spanish which is, after all, his goal.

When Jake was in high school, he had only one week of Spanish. He had to change his class schedule to participate in the school band, so he had to drop his Spanish class. Prior to that one week of study, Jake claims that he did not think about studying a foreign language, that he "wasn't thinking broadly." Ever since his first exposure to Spanish in his high school classroom, however, he has tried to teach himself. He bought a Spanish book about five or six years ago

to learn Spanish but found that "it's frustrating and difficult to teach yourself." For "all these years [he has] been after the language," and now he sees that he is in the "position" to learn more Spanish and "really start to speak." Even though the foreign language requirement for his degree, is two years of Spanish, he feels that he will continue his Spanish studies after meeting this requirement.

Jake's Anxiety

Jake recognizes that as he continues his foreign language study, his enthusiasm for learning a second language has dropped significantly, in a large part, from his struggle to keep up his grades. Jake describes his experience of anxiety as a vicious cycle that begins with worrying so much about failure, which tends to be defined by his grades. He becomes debilitated by anxiety and uses terms such as "freaking out," "drawing a blank," and "confusion" to describe anxiety's effect on him. When he is anxious, Jake is "so focused on what [he doesn't] know" that he forgets what he knows. This information "gets kind of shoved off in the corner somewhere, and that is what comes out - what you don't know is what comes out." He claims that he tries everything in his power to try to relax--including procrastination.

Maintaining a Balance

Jake claims that he is always striving to maintain a balance in his perspective and in his interactions with others. An example would be how he views language learning in

the context of giving up control to get knowledge. He sees the process as a compromise, ideally. For him, the process is a "give and take thing. You give up a little, and you get something as opposed to you giving up everything or taking everything." Jake takes a philosophical approach to life with an open mind ready to do battle with and find balance in all that is set before him.

Not only does Jake purposely put himself in unfamiliar situations and try to make them more familiar, but he also tries to get involved by changing himself somewhat, adapting to the situation. In the language learning environment of the classroom, he admits that he does have to constantly remind himself to be courageous and that he is successful despite his lowering grades. He battles his "mental thoughts, to calm down, and go from being negative to being positive." He often consoles himself with a balance of perspective:

Well, OK, you're doing OK. You're learning a new language. It's just like learning anything else, and it starts with that first step.

Being in Control

Jake speaks of his "comfort zone" as a place where he has and maintains control. He describes the "uncomfortable zone" as the place that is unfamiliar and unknown to him, where "all of the sudden you are kind of nobody." Although he feels he purposefully puts himself in the uncomfortable zone, the language classroom, as a challenge, he does feel vulnerable like "being in first grade." He admits that his

feeling of vulnerability comes from lacking a sense of control.

Jake tends to feel powerless in the classroom because he cannot speak Spanish. He describes his language teacher as the person "who actually has command" of the classroom because she knows the language. To establish and maintain a sense of control, Jake tries to "keep everything in perspective and have a clear understanding" of what he knows. By re-evaluating on his own terms what success in the classroom means to him, he is able to carry on with a positive attitude, feeling more in control. Constantly, however, he has to remind himself "that no one is looking at [him] as a dummy." He is willing to admit, even to himself, that it is courageous for anyone to "venture" "outside of what's comfortable" to learn a foreign language.

Although he tends to be more comfortable when he feels in control of his surroundings, Jake says that he is not a "control freak." He does not want to "dominate" anyone or be dominated by anyone either. He believes in "fair play" and having a "balance" of power in his classroom environment. He describes a connection between his sense of control in the classroom environment and his experience of anxiety:

That's kind of where the control comes in. If I don't feel like I have any measure of control, then I think that more than anything that where the anxiousness is...I don't want to be totally out of control...it's like a balance that important...if you do feel somewhat in control of the situation, not dominating, but in control of maybe your surroundings, I have a tendency to feel more comfortable.

Portrait of Lisa

Lisa's Introduction

Lisa is a 29 year-old European-American, the only married student of the participants in this study. She is currently attending the university to finish her Bachelor's degree in English. During her years away from the university, Lisa worked full-time and settled into married life. Lisa takes a practical approach to her schooling that is defined by her needs as an older, nontraditional student who has a life outside of the university environment. For the past two years, she has been taking one or two classes at a time toward the completion of her Arts and Sciences degree while maintaining her full-time work schedule. Lisa has maintained a 3.5 grade point average, and is currently taking her fourth semester of French which completes her two-year foreign language requirement for her major.

Throughout the interview, Lisa carries a tone of resignation and defeat. She expresses an attitude of frustration in describing her foreign language experience which she views as a disappointment. The impact of her frustration is apparent in her conversation style. She expresses her ideas in choppy segments, jumping from one frustration to another without attempting to explore these

frustrations on her own. She seems to find resolution in her resignation to her poor performance. Several times after expressing a scenario in her French class that she finds frustrating she made the comment, "Oh well, I just don't care."

Lisa is fastidious about how she spends her time and with whom she spends it. She admits that she likes to "separate" herself from "large groups of people." Feeling that she has "so little time to concentrate on friends" and that she has just a few friends that she really cares "about giving time to," she believes that she does not have "enough time or emotional capacity left over for other people really." If she finds that she does not have a particular interest in someone, she will not "deal with them." She further explains her resolve,

I just don't care. I'll be nice and friendly and that sort of thing, but I just don't have the energy to input into something that's not pleasing to me.

This attitude resonates in Lisa's perception of her interaction with fellow classmates. She asserts the posture of being "of the age" where she really does not "care about peer pressure" and "being in good graces with college kids." She sees herself as "very far removed" from college "life," and she tends to "make it known" to fellow students that she is not "a part" of the college "life."

Even though she holds herself separate from her college-age peers, she is inclined to depend on her classmates for

explanations of the exercises and material being taught in the class. Lisa recognizes that other students have trouble understanding the material, yet she admits that she gets "just too embarrassed to speak up" and ask her teacher questions about the material because she does not want to look like "the only idiot in the class." Since she relies on her classmates for understanding and clarity, she seeks out classmates who appear to be resourceful and proficient in French. She likes to have English explanations for new concepts and vocabulary, and English explanations seem more readily available from her peers than from the French instructor.

Lisa's Attitude Toward Learning French

Never having studied a foreign language in high school, Lisa has "no French background whatsoever." She started learning a foreign language two years ago as a part of her Arts and Sciences curriculum. Had she not been required to do so, she "would not have chosen to take a foreign language" because learning a foreign language "didn't matter" to her. However, there are French speakers in her family, who "don't speak much English," so she decided on French as her focus to meet her language requirement. Even though she was "forced" to study a foreign language to fulfill a curriculum requirement, she went into her French classes really wanting to learn the language, thinking that she "would like to be able to communicate with" her French speaking family. Now,

she feels that she just wants to get through it, get it over with.

I went into the course really wanting to learn French, really wanting to learn the language, and now all I can think about is getting out of there. All I want to do is make a D or better. I really don't care about the language. I don't care if I learn it. I just want to get done with it.

Lisa believes that those who study "French" and "Spanish" tend to "over romanticize" language learning, thinking that they're just going to "automatically pick it up and be able to learn it." She feels that initially she "kind of" held this notion as well, but her experience of language learning has taught her that language learning is demanding and perplexing.

Considering that she has had a difficult time achieving a self-accepted level of performance, Lisa is disappointed with the class and suffers from a lack of enthusiasm toward learning French. When she has finished her required course work in French, however, she would like to "continue to keep up on French and try to learn some of it on [her] own." Pursuing French by her own means will allow her to "turn" French learning "back into" something she likes to do, instead of it being "something that is forced" on her.

Lisa's Experience with Frustration

Lisa describes her feelings of frustration as the product of feeling "lost." She often feels that she has prepared adequately for an exam and knows the material, yet when she has the exam in front of her, she finds that she has

"no clue," "no idea," or that "there's no way I can get this," and she "just [doesn't] understand what this paper says." She assesses that her feelings of frustration shift from herself, "Why am I not learning this?" to the material, "Why was that test so hard? I know I knew it," and then to the teacher, "Why are you asking me this?"

Lisa attributes most of her frustration to the methodology used by her French instructors. She does not "like this method" and "the way it's structured." Vast differences lie in her learning style and the methodology's means of approaching French instruction. These differences feed her contention that "there's just really not much room for your own methods" of learning in the classroom.

Lisa is studying French using an immersion method which she finds "overwhelming" and "hard to follow," especially since she has "no French background whatsoever." She perceives that she has "no reference point" when she is reviewing the material, since the material is not reinforced. French words are mentioned "three or four times" in a lesson with "absolutely no English whatsoever," and when these words appear on the test, they seem "completely new." Lisa likes things concretely, in black and white, and she feels more comfortable being "prompted" with the English translation.

Portrait of Denise

Denise's Introduction

Denise is a 21 year-old traditional student who is pursuing a Bachelors degree in English. She is European-American and Christian. God is an important part of her life, and she speaks about how she interacts with God in her experience of anxiety. She is finishing her fourth semester of French and has formed some definite opinions on personal responsibility in learning a foreign language. She believes that if she is "not catching on," it is "probably my fault."

Denise has the quick, chatty interview style of one who is loquacious and ready to tell all upon being asked the question by the researcher. Throughout her description of her experience, she changes the subject of her narration quickly. In other words, she initiates an idea and without really exploring or expounding on that idea, she embarks on another. She consistently interjects explanations of herself and her perceptions in-between the details she gives of her experience learning a foreign language. Interesting, the many details she conveys of her French classes and her teachers do not seem to reflect a sense of deeper contemplation of her experience as a language student.

Denise likes her summer school classes because her French class meets everyday, and this daily exposure to French enables her to retain more of the language and "to

interact with the teacher a lot." As a result, she feels that she does better in the summer semester when there is not "that two day or three day period to forget," than in the fall or spring semesters when classes only meet three times a week and there is a "that time lag in-between classes."

Before Denise began to study French, she claims that she was very "intimidated." She had "always heard that learning a foreign language is really hard," and not like learning "Biology" for instance, where one has been exposed to "little bits and pieces of science" already. She explains that with previous exposure to some "pieces of science," further study of a science like biology allows "all the pieces of the puzzle" to "fall into place" at some point. Learning a foreign language is "hard" because "it shows up in big block form and there you are having to chisel away little pieces and little pieces don't form together, to start off." Denise provides an example of her analogy with her explanation of being extremely intimidated by her French teacher speaking French "the whole time" in the beginning of her French class.

Denise's Attitude Toward Learning French

Denise remembers being intrigued with foreign languages when she was young. While making up strange words, Denise and her young friends would pretend to speak a foreign language as it was their way of getting a "glimpse of the inside of another world." Denise "thought it was exciting because it was having a way to...it's actually another way to converse

that makes sense." Denise now believes that by learning a foreign language, she will be able to "gain a step into a new culture." Further, she would be able to speak to a foreigner from another country and "impress" her friends. By "not knowing a foreign language," she feels "like an outsider" when with others who speak a foreign language.

Before Denise studied French in high school, a female foreign exchange student who was "miserable" from staying on campus, came to stay with Denise and her family. Denise found it "fun" and "exciting" to "talk just a little bit" in French with her, learning commonly-used French phrases. By learning and speaking French with this exchange student, Denise felt that she was not only able to put the student "at ease" but also able to "challenge" herself. And, Denise seems to like the fact that she has studied French. She values knowledge of a foreign language and sees learning a foreign language as "a way to become more cultured and like a proficient" since "a person who has a lot of knowledge is often considered...they have a lot of value."

Realizing that it is important to "pick a foreign language that you're interested in," Denise says that she "would never have chosen Japanese or the German language" since she is not interested in these languages. She feels that "the motivation that you have to hang onto" is an interest in the language. As an example of this point, she refers to one fellow student who appeared to be "just flat

out bitter" because he had to study a language to fulfill his curriculum requirement. She feels that this student "had the hardest time" with the class because he did not have "the attitude that he wanted to learn." Witnessing her fellow classmate's difficulties with motivation and attitude along with her own difficulties in language learning has led Denise to conclude that "you have to have some kind of motivation going other than it's required" in order to make it through a foreign language class.

Denise's Experience of Anxiety

Although Denise thinks of herself as "usually really high strung," she does not think her feelings of anxiety are always debilitating. In fact, she believes that there are times when she works better under pressure. She feels that "anxiety helps when I've got an assignment due in two days or in a few hours," and she sees anxiety in these circumstances as a motivational force and as something positive. She does not mind "being high strung about academics" because she finds that if she is "not real anxious about an assignment, it'll take me forever to do it, so it helps me control my time, to be anxious."

Even so, anxiety is not always motivational or positive for Denise. She claims that "anxiety doesn't help me when I'm right there in the middle of it," or, in other words, when she is put "on the spot to speak about something." She has found that being put on the spot "creates the most anxiety"

while "the written stuff and the homework assignments weren't a big anxiety."

Being a Christian Plays a Part

As a Christian, Denise attributes everything that happens to her to God. Denise believes that assuming any personal merit for having performed well on a task is vain because the honor should be given to God. She believes that she does not "get anything without God, without him backing me up."

God plays a role in Denise's experience of anxiety as well. She admits that it is hard for her to separate the anxiety that "doesn't help" from the anxiety that "does help" because of the nature of her interaction with God. She feels that...

it's really hard for me sometimes to separate the two because my relationship with God interferes with everything I do, not interferes, but really helps out. And specifically as a Christian we're called not to be anxious for anything...

As a Christian, Denise feels that she is called upon to have faith in God to "'direct'" her "'path,'" and this "faith" will allow her to "'be anxious for nothing.'" Consequently, when Denise feels anxiety and that there is "no human way to get something done on time," she turns to God for His help, an extension of "grace."

A sense of personal responsibility

Denise talks about her change in attitude toward foreign language learning in the classroom and learning in

general. Instead of getting frustrated with the material and angry or bitter at the teacher when learning is difficult, she feels that she must "have the attitude to accept the responsibility of things that I can be doing different." Denise views teachers as "the people that are trying to help me." She sees that it is her "job" to get through the class and to do her best, "to do my assignments on time and to do the assignments, period and you know, you're responsible." Because she is "not blind" or "deaf" and does not "have a learning disability," she sees "no reason why I shouldn't be able to do this." For Denise, "just changing my attitude, basically, is the best way."

Portrait of Michael

Michael's Introduction

Michael is a 23 year-old European-American. He is a traditional student, having gone into the university immediately after high school and continually worked on his Bachelor's degree in Political Science until the present. He is taking two years of a foreign language since it is a requirement for his major. Since French was the language he took in high school, he continued to study French in college "instead of having to relearn another" language.

Michael has deep voice and is a fast talker. He describes himself as "a little high strung" and as having a "short attention span" since he does not "like to sit still."

He claims that he gets "bored very easily," so he likes to be "stimulated" or "to be doing something." Even though he has his answers ready seemingly before the questions are asked, he does not manifest a strong sense of reflection and introspection upon his experience as a student. He does express, however, a lot of frustration with his foreign language learning experience.

Michael gives an impression of having come to the interview with an idea in mind of venting all of his complaints about being required to study a foreign language, about the methodology used in his language classes, about his language teachers and the French department at the university. Further, he claims that his participation in his language classes was not as "gratifying" as participating in classes with a "debate over something, or discussing a concept that [he] would find interesting," such as he would do in other Arts and Sciences classes.

Interestingly, he describes himself at one point as the "fairly studious type" although he admits that he is a "typical college student" who studies his assignments at the last minute. Even so, he usually does well in his classes. Later in the interview, however, he recognizes that perhaps he is "not a studious person" because...

a studious person can do well in any class. No matter what it is, they can jump in and just memorize 15 numbers in some kind of order and they'll do it and enjoy it and get a good grade on it.

In his language classes, Michael does not do well and feels frustrated with these classes as a result of his poor performance. According to Michael, language classes simply "drag your GPA down."

Michael's Attitude toward learning French

When describing his language learning process, Michael says that he needs to have something concrete to draw upon and learning language by an abstract or intangible means is not in his "mind set." He relies heavily on memorization and association with grammar and vocabulary learning, yet he claims he does not enjoy memorizing because it is "mindless studying." To Michael, language class seems like "one big continuous stream of busy work." He feels differently about his political science courses because they require more abstract thinking. Whereas he is unable to learn language by abstract usage and expression in the language classroom, he is able to learn using abstract ideas and expression in his political science classes which he finds more "stimulating."

Michael admits that he is "not at all interested in learning a language in itself." He does not want to spend a lot of time on things in which he is not interested, so he claims to have a bad attitude toward his language study. He describes the language material that he studies as "almost infantile" because of the lower level vocabulary he has to learn, using "long johns" as his example of lower level vocabulary.

Michael feels that one's participation in language class involves "just basically doing your part to get your 15% in the class." He holds the idea of 15% participation as "just answering questions, doing homework, showing up" for class, and "acting somewhat interested." However, he feels that there is not any "big reward" in participating in a language class. "It would be rewarding if I could walk out of that classroom full of French," but this is not the case for Michael. He believes that language class is the type of class that "you just do what you have to do to get through."

Michael feels that after "two whole years" of foreign language study, he would have liked to have come out of his French classes knowing French. However, he does not "know it to his satisfaction." Not only is he disappointed "that it had to work out that way" but he also is irritated "that [he] had to have a bad experience with it."

An Experience of Frustration

Michael's bad experience with foreign language learning seems to comprise a number of disappointments. One of Michael's frustrations is with what he sees as his language teachers' expectations of his level of language proficiency, "especially when you get into the upper levels like when you get into the 112 or like 212." He feels that "most people don't know" what language teachers "assume" students know and teachers "don't go back and explain things." In fact, he feels that "nobody wants to help you. Nobody can give you any

explanations." When his French teacher suggested that he seek tutoring since he was not understanding the material, she did not have a further suggestion of where he could find information about a French language tutor. At the time, Michael felt that it did not matter how "hard you study or what you do, you're making an F," so he rationalized his decision to quit going to his French class:

I'm not going to blow all my other classes for this. So, I just quit going to class, which is not something I do normally. I'm not going to screw my other classes or get a low grade in my major because I can't keep up in this class.

His concern about his GPA leads to another disappointment with his foreign language experience since Michael received "the only F I've ever made in college" in his French class. He wants to go to graduate school, but he recognizes that "if you don't have a decent GPA, you're kind of out of luck."

Another point of contention for Michael is that the language department changed the methodology used to teach French in the middle of his language program, after his first year of studying French. He feels that the change in instruction has impeded his progress in learning French. Because he started learning French by English definitions and translation, "all you're thinking about is definitions, and that's the way I was taught," he claims to have a hard time adapting to the new immersion method where "you're taught to associate the word with an action instead of associate with a

concrete definition." He explains his difficulty adjusting his "mind" since he is used to learning "in a certain way and it doesn't want to learn in another way." He believes that his "anxiety starts with this new method." Whereas he feels he could "tackle" the old method and "would still learn" French, the new method is too different from his way of relating to a new language and, therefore, does not facilitate language learning for Michael.

Portrait of Daniel

Daniel's Introduction

Daniel is focusing his studies on Economics, but he is in the Arts and Sciences curriculum. He is a 21 year-old, European-American and is considered a traditional student. He is currently completing his first year of Spanish and plans to take one more year of Spanish to fulfill his foreign language requirement for his curriculum. Initially, Daniel decided that German would be the language he would study to meet his language requirement, but he failed his first semester of it. Since he studied Spanish in high school and is more familiar with it than German, he has switched to Spanish to meet the language requirement.

Daniel has a speech handicap. He has stuttered since he was young although in his adult life he says that he has much more control over his speech. He says that he has learned to deal with his tendency to stutter by "[plowing] on through

it, no matter how dumb it looks." Nevertheless, his stuttering was barely detectable during the interview as he seemed to have a natural flow of narration. He does speak slowly, however, which creates an impression of being methodical and circumspect in character. He finds that his speech impediment becomes a problem only when he gets "real nervous," "especially when I have to talk in a classroom situation."

Further, he uses platitudinous "college" expressions which convey what he sees as his "college" attitude and philosophy. An example of this attitude/philosophy is the following:

A little voice in the back of my head says, 'don't put any work into it if you don't have to. It's the college rule. If you don't have to study, drink.'

Daniel has found his beginning Spanish class to be easier than expected and his philosophy condones that he does not need to study much since he is doing so well. Although he made D's in his high school Spanish classes, he is presently making "an A or a B" which he finds "surprising." He claims that his expectations of "learning a foreign language are not as high" as they once were since he does not apply himself to his studies.

Daniel's Attitude Toward Learning Spanish

At first, Daniel was excited at the prospect of learning a foreign language. He "thought it would be neat" because he "could communicate better" if he "ever wanted to travel

abroad and go somewhere else." He "figured it would be kind of fair" since he knows "a lot of other cultures that had to learn English." Moreover, he espouses the belief that "it kind of makes sense that we should learn their language too."

Daniel thought initially that he would be able to speak Spanish proficiently. Now, he is not so certain. He admits that "partially I don't see a need" to learn a foreign language and "partially I don't see it happening" with the current "curriculum." Even though he does not expect "to be speaking proficiently anytime soon," he maintains the hope that "by the time I get through these general courses, I should be able to stammer around very proficiently."

Daniel's complaint about the curriculum centers on the "rote" aspects of language learning, "you just kind of do everything in the book just exactly like the example." He remonstrates that he has not "done a whole lot that involves free thought." His example of an exercise involving free thought would be to "write a paragraph about yourself," "your favorite sport," or "your favorite food."

Before he began learning a foreign language, Daniel held a rather realistic notion that language learning "would be a lot of repetition and a lot of speaking aloud, a lot of memorization." Only when he embarked on his language studies did he realize that "there was so much memorization, and I'm not very good at memorizing." His experience of difficulty led to "excuses" about not wanting to study a foreign

language such as, "I'm never going anywhere, why should I learn this?" and "if everybody else is learning [English], why should I have to" learn a foreign language. Furthermore, he feels that he has to learn a language against his will, and his justification for not wanting to comply with this requirement of his curriculum has become, "this has nothing to do with my major. I'm never going to use it." Now, Daniel thinks that learning Spanish "feels like a waste of time," and he is "impatient about getting out of Spanish."

Daniel has devised ways of taking his Spanish tests that have allowed him to be successful thus far, compensating for the lack of effort he puts into studying. He admits that he "kind of got lucky" making guesses on test exercises like "matching." His good grades have sustained his notion that he does not need to devote much time to studying for his tests, so, he confesses, "when it came time for the final, I didn't study hardly at all. I didn't put much work into it."

Daniel's Experience of Anxiety

Because Daniel has a speech impediment, he experiences anxiety "every time" he is asked to speak "in a classroom situation." Generally, he perceives himself as "just a very nervous person," and he tends to "get anxiety about just having to speak the language." When he is asked to speak, he "just [freezes] up" and "it takes forever to get that first word out." At the beginning of the semester, he did not have too much trouble speaking in class "because all the words

were easy and I knew them. I knew how to pronounce them correctly." As the material progressed, it became "harder, and it's taken me longer to figure out the exercises." When his teacher would call on him while he was still "working on the exercises," he would experience anxiety. "There's a little shock factor there."

He describes his anxiety as linked to a fear of both "failure" and "success" although he talks more about his fear of failure in the interview. He "was scared" he "was going to flunk" the class because his "folks were going to kill" him. He "was afraid of succeeding" because he felt that "it was kind of a hollow victory" since he "hadn't studied anything," and therefore, "hadn't learned anything."

Daniel deals with anxiety by avoiding its cause, trying to get his "mind off of it as much as [he] can." He feels that he often has "too many other things" on his mind, and he is "going a million miles a minute." Therefore, he "can't keep concentrated." One way in which he has dealt with his anxiety was going out with a friend "bar hopping until two in the morning" on the night before an exam. In other scenarios, he tends to smoke "a lot of cigarettes" or "sleep."

Daniel feels that "the best way not to have anxiety is to be comfortable with what you've done." He believes that if one is doing what he/she feels one needs to be doing to learn, there will not be any "problems." Daniel thinks that the "biggest problem I have is that I just never study."

Therefore, some of his anxiety is not "the language, it's just the fact that [he] didn't study." Having to learn "something that was against my will" feeds Daniel's anxiety since he lacks the desire to study the required material to learn the language.

Summary

The participants in this study have particular characteristics in common that should be considered. All of the participants were taking a foreign language to fulfill the two-year foreign language requirement for an Arts and Sciences degree at the university. Even though a foreign language is a curriculum requirement, every participant took an interest in learning the language initially, thinking that knowledge of a second language would be advantageous. Each participant showed concern toward maintaining a good grade point average, and each viewed foreign language courses as a threat to his/her GPA.

All of the participants described themselves as anxious people in general. Although he was not a "control freak," Jake felt anxious when he was not in control. Susan said that her high expectations of academic performance caused her anxiety, which she tended to "internalize" as anxiety, and she had "high blood pressure" as a result. Michael and Denise described themselves as "high strung" academically. Michael

had a "short attention span" and liked to be mentally "stimulated" and Denise worked "better under pressure." Daniel was an "impatient" person and wanted everything "now." Lisa was "just anxious about everything."

Some of the differences between the participants are notable as well. Susan, Denise, and Michael had French in high school, and they opted to take it in college. Daniel had Spanish in high school which he decided to continue in college, after an unsuccessful attempt at German. Jake only had one week of Spanish in high school and chose to take Spanish in college whereas Lisa had had no high school foreign language experience and opted to study French at the university since she has French speakers in her family.

Furthermore, all of the participants except Susan thought that foreign language learning would be easier than it turned out to be in the classroom, and the challenge of learning a language had led to a decline in enthusiasm or lack of willingness to learn a foreign language. Susan had felt success throughout her language learning experience and anticipated knowing French proficiently. She expected to continue studying French "as long as she can." Michael and Lisa were disappointed that they could not speak French at the end of their two-year study, and expressed frustration with the methodology because it did not teach "concrete" language and did not put things in "black and white." Despite her negative experience with foreign language learning, Lisa

wanted to continue learning French her own way once she has met her requirement and to "turn it back into" something that she liked. Michael was happy to be finishing his language courses and did not intend to continue to study French. Jake wanted to speak proficient Spanish and "incorporate" its use into his every day life despite his weakening enthusiasm in the classroom. Daniel concluded that studying Spanish is a "waste of time."

Denise expressed some frustration with the methodology because she did not have enough time to pick up the basics and retain the material. Even so, she believed that any problems that she had with learning French were her own responsibility, and she held herself accountable for her performance. Michael, on the other hand, believed that his teachers and the methodology were responsible for his poor performance. Susan and Daniel both admitted that they did not apply themselves to their language studies as much as they should, even though they were both doing well. Jake was not sure about his grade, and he seemed to be struggling more with applying himself and his performance as the semester went on.

Conclusion

Though the group of participants as a whole shared commonalities as language learners, each individually had a

distinctive set of personal characteristics that accounted for the differences exhibited in each student's experience of foreign language learning. Recognizing these differences is essential to validate the intricacies of the language learning experience which give rise to the complexity of the experience of foreign language anxiety. To gain further understanding of this phenomenon, Chapter Five will present the data in a framework based on the themes that run throughout the data. This framework will be followed by a discussion of the themes.

Chapter Five

Data Presentation

This chapter presents the data in thematic units that have emerged from and are based on the perceptions of the participants as a group. A model of foreign language anxiety has been constructed based on these findings and is presented and discussed in this chapter. The model illustrates the nature of language learning anxiety as a process involving cause, effect, assessment and strategy. First, this model will be explained in terms of the general thematic units derived from the data. Following the model, the thematic units will be presented under the general categories of causes of language learning anxiety, characteristics of language learning anxiety, assessment of language learning anxiety, and strategies for dealing with language learning anxiety. A brief summary of the data analysis will conclude the chapter.

Model of Language Learning Anxiety

This model of language learning anxiety is based on the analysis of the data generated from the participants and is, therefore, grounded on the students' perceptions of their language learning anxiety. In fact, the model is referred to

as the "Vicious Cycle" Model (Figure 1), a name which has been taken from a quote of one of the participants in which he describes his perception of his language learning anxiety. The model will be discussed in four parts: 1) the perception of a lack of control as the cause of language learning anxiety; 2) the characteristics of language learning anxiety; 3) the assessment of the anxiety experienced, of the learning environment, and of the self in relation to both; and 4) the strategies for dealing with language learning anxiety that are generated from this assessment.

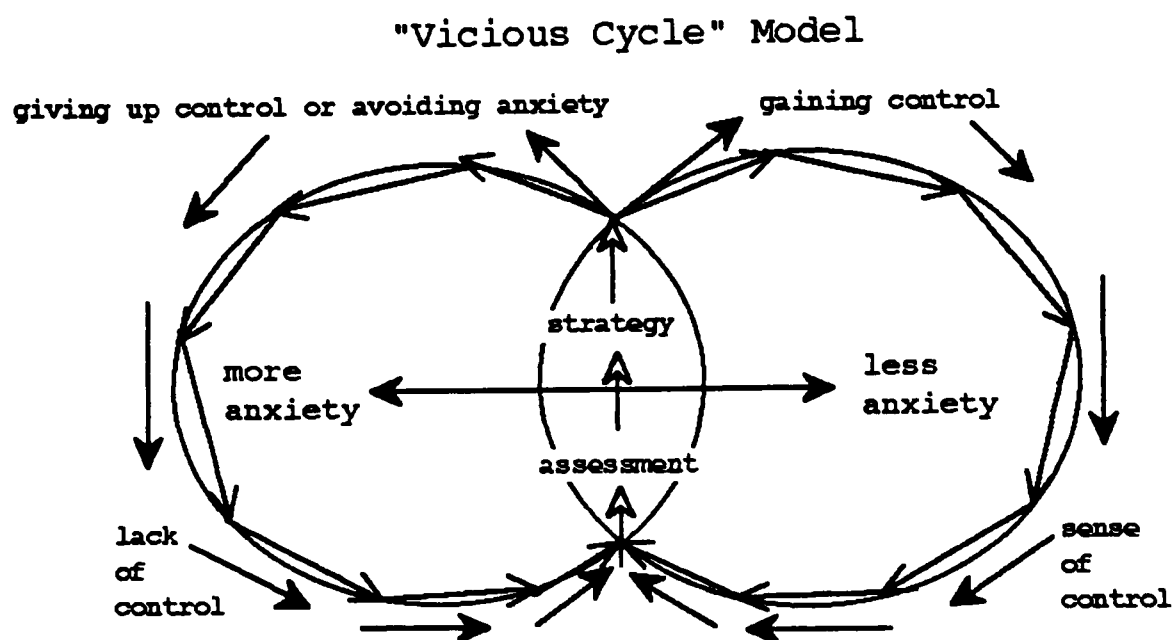
Perception of a Lack of Control-Cause of Language Learning Anxiety

As the model indicates, the perception of having a lack of control over the language learning process and context characterizes students who are more language learning anxious. In other words, the foreign language student's perception of control in the language learning context and of his/her language learning has an impact on the language learning anxiety experienced by the student. The less control that these language learning students feel they have in the language classroom and of the language learning process, the more language learning anxiety these students appear to experience.

Characteristics of Language Learning Anxiety

The language learning anxiety experienced by these foreign language students has physical, emotional and

FIGURE 1



cognitive characteristics that not only challenge their sense of comfort and competency in the language learning classroom but, further, impede their performance in the classroom and their process of learning. These characteristics are the manifestations of having one's sense of control of language learning challenged and held in question, if not completely diminished. In the model, these characteristics can be viewed along a continuum of more anxiety to less anxiety experienced by the learner which maintains a direct relationship with the perception of control that the student maintains.

Assessing Language Learning Anxiety, Context and Self

With reference to the model, at some point during the experience of their language learning anxiety, language learners begin to analyze what was happening to them, assessing why they were experiencing anxiety or why they were not learning or performing well. This assessment involves analyzing and understanding the causes of the language anxiety experienced and, in turn, addressing these issues with devised strategies of dealing with language anxiety.

Strategies of Dealing with Language Learning Anxiety

Lastly, as the model illustrates, the assessment of the student's language learning context and process proceeds to language anxiety strategies, ways to deal with this phenomenon. The strategies that these participants reveal are dichotomous in nature. These strategies can either provide a sense of gaining control of the language learning situation,

enabling the student to alleviate some language learning anxiety, or they can lead to a sense of giving up control. Perhaps the student can avoid language anxiety temporarily, but forfeiting control leads the student back to a sense of a lack of control of the language learning situation which, in turn, generates more anxiety. Hence, the "Vicious Cycle" of the language learning anxious experience is one where the student does not seem to develop strategies to deal with language learning anxiety that facilitate gaining a sense of control of language learning and of the language learning environment.

The Causes of Language Learning Anxiety

The anxiety experienced by the student participants appears to be a manifestation of each student's perception of a lack of control in the language learning environment and language learning process. Tables 1 through 5 present the data that demonstrates this theme. The perception of a lack of control as a cause of language learning anxiety can be understood in several ways. These students are competent learners in their other, non-language learning classroom environments. They have devised ways of learning and performing in those environments that allow them to be successful and to feel some measure of control in those environments. And, since their language classes are

unfamiliar, unpredictable, and unstructured to them, these students are bound to feel that they lack control in these environments. Michael talks about the unfamiliarity:

I guess I'm used to political Science which is...and other Liberal Arts type of courses. There is no concretes in those courses...it's a class that they discuss and analyze things. When you go into a language class, it's just what I see just one big continuous stream of busy work. Just mindless studying. I think the key is, I like to be stimulated. If it's not stimulating. I have a very short attention span...my method of studying for those type of classes, I want to be able to memorize it.

Their developed means of learning and performing for evaluation may not apply in the language learning context and a lack of application of their devised strategies for academic success and survival disrupts their sense of competency and comfort. Jake sees a direct connection between his anxiety and not feeling in control of his language learning environment:

If I don't feel like I have any measure of control, then I think that more than anything that where the anxiousness is.

The lack of control experienced involves issues such as the immediacy of the language learning environment, the students' perception of the language teacher, the perception of the language methodology, the perception of evaluation in the learning environment, as well as the perception of the relevancy of the language to each student personally. These issues are interrelated and provide the complexity for the sense of a lack of control these students have experienced. However, these issues are presented and described as

individual issues to unveil and reveal some of the details of this complexity, which shape the lack of control that causes the language anxiety these students experience.

Immediacy of the Learning Environment

The language learning environment for these students is the university classroom. One way in which these students perceive a lack of control in this environment is through a comparison of their language classes with other university classes. With reference to Table 1, these students perceive the language learning environment as one that is different from other classroom environments because of the immediacy of the interaction between the students, themselves, and the teacher, the material being studied, and other students. Denise describes how she feels in the language classroom:

I think because there's no other kind of experience to draw from in order to relate to what's about to happen...She'll speak, or he'll speak French the whole time and you're standing there going, I'm so intimidated I ought to drop the class right now. I'll never understand it if this is what it's going to be like the whole time.

Further, the language classroom is an unfamiliar place to these students. It is a place where they experience a sense of vulnerability and incompetency as well as a lack of structure, "there's not enough structure," "it's just real unstructured," and organization because they do not know what to expect in this environment. These students feel that they have no time to plan ahead and organize themselves for interacting and learning in this environment. Susan

Table 1

Students' Perceptions of Causes of Anxiety

Immediacy of the Foreign Language Learning Environment

Susan	I have a long, long way to go to be able to, my understanding has gotten a lot better, but, as far as being able to talk to somebody, I do not feel competent about that at all...I feel very self conscious being with people who actually speak the language.
Lisa	They are like, "Here it is, OK, let's move on." "Oh, wait a minute. What was that? I didn't get that." And, you're like afraid to say anything because you didn't say it in French...This class just goes way too fast.
Denise	A lot of times that was stressful...when I was expected to kind of converse without any kind of knowledge ahead of time. It's just really the on-the-spot speaking-being on the spot to speak about something.
Jake	I really mess up, and I don't really get the full idea of what's going on or don't get the context in which something is being said because I'm not picking up all the words, I'm just picking up a few of them.
Michael	There are people in there that already know French somewhat and you don't know anything. And you're already behind because they've probably had it in elementary school or whatever. You start getting overwhelmed on the first day.
Daniel	I just freeze up. If she asks me to talk I'm like, I can't say a word. Once I get ready to say a word, it takes forever to get that first word out.

elaborates on some of the participation requirements of her French class and the difficulties she has with planning ahead and organizing herself:

I mean she warned us a head of time, and I could have come in with better material I guess, but she indicated that she was going to ask questions, and we were going to have to answer them from our own experience and not text book answers, so I was a little worried about that because I didn't know what questions she was going to ask, so I didn't have time to prepare...even during the test...I was anxious. I feel best on...the written exams where first of all, I feel like you have a little more time to think about it on the written exam...you can see when something looks wrong, but I seem to be unable at this point to tell when I'm saying something wrong...that makes me kind of anxious. In class, I do get kind of anxious when sometimes she makes assignments where we write about...about our weekend or something. That's somewhat stressful for me because that's a situation where I'm going to have to formulate a sentence that isn't in the book. I'm going to have to make up my own...talk about my life in French...that's something that's not, I don't have time to plan it. I don't have time to think about it...that's another unstructured situation where I feel anxious.

Without being able to plan and organize themselves, these students feel a lack of control over their language learning process and environment which leads to the feeling of language anxiety that these students experience.

Perception of the Language Teacher

Another way in which these students reveal their perception of a lack of control is through their portrayal of their language teachers as having full control of the language learning environment. Table 2 illustrates this portrayal based on these students' perceptions. This teacher position of authority and power threatens each of these students' sense of control and competency in the language

Table 2

Students' Perceptions of Causes of Anxiety

Perception of the Language Teacher

Susan	I don't think my next semester French is going to be much better. In fact, I'm kind of worried about that because I'm afraid I'll get a teacher who's more difficult than the one I have now—who will actually make me speak French a lot, or who won't talk as slowly.
Lisa	She will not give you any English help at all. She won't prompt you at all. She's not very animated.
Denise	She was real difficult to understand in class just because of her accent, and I don't think she had any educational experience as far as being able to actually teach it.
Jake	Here's this person standing up here in front of me, and she's probably the same age as I am. She knows all this, and I know nothing, and I feel like I'm back in first grade.
Michael	It's kind of irritating, especially when the teacher is not...maybe she just doesn't have the talent for teaching that allows her to talk to everybody on their level, whatever that level may be to a certain extent...She shouldn't just assume that you know a little bit and kind of take things for granted.
Daniel	[no comment]

learning classroom. Jake describes his perception of the language teacher's command of the language classroom versus his own sense of control:

I just have a smidgen of control, but that's nothing compared to a person who actually has command of that environment. The person that knows the language has command in that environment. The person that doesn't, which is me in that classroom, I'm pretty much powerless because I don't speak, I don't know it.

These teachers have knowledge of the foreign language and are in the position of an evaluative power, being able to judge the students' knowledge of the language.

Further, these students perceive that the teacher should have the ability to provide access to the language and the materials used in the classroom, which would facilitate the students' sense of having more control in the classroom. Even so, some of these students believe that their teachers are apathetic to their needs, are unwilling to help or provide access to learning, or are unable to provide access because they are limited by the language department, or they lack good teaching skills. As Michael points out:

When he came to the explanations on how to do the grammar stuff, he said well, the department doesn't want you to speak any English...I think it's pressure from the department...It doesn't seem that there is any desire for the teachers to help the students too much...they're going to help you get through the class, but...they're not going to do anything to ease the anxiety by making the material any easier or a little bit more understandable.

These students feel powerless and frustrated as a result of the teacher's unwillingness or inability to provide access to

learning when they have the power to do so, which builds on these students' experience of language anxiety.

Perception of the Relevancy of the Language

A third way in which these students feel a lack of control is by having to study a foreign language as a requirement of their curricula. Table 3 illustrates the issue of relevancy of learning a foreign language to these students. The difficulty of the language class and the requirement of a foreign language have caused these students to consider the relevancy, or usefulness, of the foreign language they are learning. These students do not perceive the foreign language as rewarding or useful to their needs as students or as future professionals because they do not anticipate using the language. In fact, in some cases, these students feel that the foreign language is forced on them. Michael expresses his view of learning a foreign language:

I'm not at all interested in learning a language in itself. I saw it as something as a weed out course, you had to take it. You have no choice. You either take it, or you don't graduate.

These students are required to learn a foreign language which causes resentment, disappointment, and disinterest, all of which furthers their sense of having no control of what they are learning. Furthermore, a lack of control stems from the belief on the part of these students that they are not learning much of the language despite their efforts or what is required of them. Thus, the limited amount they do learn

Table 3

Students' Perceptions of Causes of Anxiety

Perception of the Language Relevancy

Susan	I don't know that I'll really get to apply it accept when I go to France, but in everyday life I don't think it's that useful.
Lisa	I think I was forced to take French as part of my curriculum. I would probably not have taken it if I didn't have to...It didn't matter to me.
Denise	I just wish the foreign language would have been an option rather than a requirement because...yeah, I had French, but seriously if someone hired me tomorrow to speak French, that was one of the requirements, it wouldn't help me out any...it hasn't aided me at all except improving my character. It didn't do much for me.
Jake	[no comment]
Michael	I would get by if I went over there right now, but I don't know it to my satisfaction, not considering that I've had two years..a total of four semesters.
Daniel	I guess you could say I don't want to learn a foreign language, I just want to be able to speak one. In my own personal life, I want to get out of school. I know what I want to do. I know it has nothing to do with my major...Why am I wasting my time in this Spanish class?

is not useful to them and, in some cases, perceived as a waste of time.

Perception of the Language Methodology

A fourth way in which these students perceive a lack of control is through their interaction with the language methodology. Table 4 illustrates the students' perceptions of this issue. For some of these students, the experience of being forced to learn a foreign language through an inaccessible methodology, has led to a sense of frustration, apathy, and even hostility toward language learning because they feel that they have no control of what they are learning. Three of these students, in particular, describe an inability to gain access to learning because the methodology limits what they learn. Lisa describes the methodology used in her French class as limiting and unhelpful:

It limits what you're learning. It's really every lesson is a little capsule, and everything that you learn outside that just will completely not help you...in this method, it will not help you because you only have certain words that you know, certain verbs that you know, and these words follow a story line...And it's so encapsulated that anything that's outside that text is not going to help you really. It's not going to help you on the test, it's not going to help your learning. It's not broad enough...They have this story that they follow, and they follow it so closely, and you don't learn anything outside that story really...It doesn't cover enough territory. It doesn't seem to prepare you for anything but taking a test on the story. It vaguely does that.

Further, the language methodology used in the language classroom is perceived by some of these students as lacking an identifiable structure, making the material and the

Table 4

Students' Perceptions of Causes of Anxiety

Perception of the Language Methodology

Susan	[no comment]
Lisa	It's completely unrelated to what we've been studying for the last three semesters, so I mean I had no really no reference point I guess is the best description. I just look at it and I'm like, well, it's completely new...I know in my heart that I'm not connecting with this method.
Denise	By the time you just maintained what the general gist of the story was, I wasn't necessarily picking up on the basics.
Jake	[no comment]
Michael	I started with...your typical language course where you study vocabulary words and you work on conjugating verbs and putting sentences together...Then we switched methods...It was the immersion method...you're supposed to kind of pick it up...like when you were a child. The difference is don't have a developed a language center of 2 years old when you're 23. So, you don't just pick it up.
Daniel	Possibly the curriculum. We have not done a whole lot that involves free thought...like when she does a homework assignment,...you just kind of do everything in the book just exactly like the example. Everything gets to be just kind of rote after that...There's no free thought I guess.

language inaccessible to them. Lisa describes the kind of structure she wants but does not get from the language methodology:

I like to see black and white, I like to see things broken down into tables and that sort of thing. This curriculum doesn't really do that for it, and it's kind of nebulous...They don't explore one verb at a time they explore lots of verbs in one form, in one conjugated form. The next time you get to that verb you don't remember what the last conjugation was so you're certainly not going to remember the new one, the new tense or conjugation...they skip around. They don't go back and use the same conjugations again and again...you learn one and then you move on to the next one. They don't ever go back to the old one.

The methodology's approach to language learning seems to contradict some of these students' learning processes. Further, in some cases, the methodology is perceived more as an intentional means of teaching a particular story in the foreign language, using less useful language, "too much stuff that doesn't mean crap," than as a means of teaching useful, "hardcore" language. Denise sees that there is too much emphasis on the story line and not enough of language explanations:

It's not just about learning French. They're trying to throw in all these things to keep our attention...the story would kind of be about how Robert had this lusty attitude towards Mare...Instead of having some instances where some of the stuff could be explained more clearly, there was this story plot they had to maintain.

In this view, therefore, the methodology is perceived as limiting these students in how and what they learn, intensifying a sense of lack of control for these students.

Perception of Evaluation in the Language Environment

A final way these students describe their sense of a lack of control is through their concerns with the evaluation in the language classroom. Table 5 reveals this data. Since each of these students expresses concern over their classroom grades as well as their GPA's, the evaluation that is naturally a part of the university foreign language classroom generates anxiety that stems from a fear of failing, both in terms of low grades and a lack of competency. Some of these students feel that there is no guarantee of success or a good grade on an exam, even when an effort is put forth to prepare. It is this uncertainty which challenges these students' sense of having control of their competency. Moreover, the grades received from these exams are, in some cases, viewed markers of language success as well. Yet, even though these students may experience success as indicated by a high grade, they sense that they have achieved a hollow victory because they realize that they are not learning the language. Daniel describes his hollow victory of passing a test for which he had not prepared:

Fear, fear of failure. Fear of success...I was scared I was going to...flunk the class...And I was afraid of succeeding because I was I felt it was...a hollow victory, like I did great on the test, but I hadn't studied anything, I hadn't learned anything.

In some cases, they feel that they are simply preparing for a good exam performance and are not learning the language. The emphasis they must place on performance, therefore,

Table 5

Students' Perceptions of Causes of Anxiety

Perception of Evaluation in the Language Learning Environment

Susan	Written exams, I do stress a little bit, simply because I don't put in the study time that I should, but not the way that I do over oral exams, which I feel that there's a little bit more of an element of surprise there.
Lisa	I never failed, even in high school, anything. And I failed my very first test this week, and I stayed up 'til 1:00 in the morning studying. I never ever do anything like that...It just makes me have, I have a lot of questions when...I'm not doing better...I just think...where is the problem?
Denise	On an oral evaluation, if you didn't know it, then too bad...you aren't given the opportunity to go back to the other question and change it...If it's not in your head, the only thing on a quiz or on an oral evaluation like that to help you is your memory, what you've done to prepare...that is your only resource. There's not things around you you can look at that could jar your memory.
Jake	Because Monday we had a sample test, and I didn't do to well...It frightened me, because I said well, this is the same format as the mid-term, and I did OK on the mid-term, an 82, but I didn't get spooked, like I got spooked on Monday...I tried to compute my GPA...I'm just really neurotic about this because I don't even know what the outcome of the test is going to be.
Michael	I ended up getting the only F I've ever made in college in this class. When you're working towards a good GPA...because it's required for going back to graduate school...If you don't have a decent GPA, you're kind of out of luck. And here's this class,...and it doesn't matter how hard you study or what you do, you're making an F.
Daniel	Taking it pass/fail I think would make it easier on you just because you would...it wouldn't be something that for one would screw up your GPA...It'd take a lot of the pressure off just because of the grade point average.

exacerbates their perception of a lack of control of their language learning.

Characteristics of Language Learning Anxiety

The anxiety experienced by these participants has particular characteristics that are described in terms of physical, emotional, and mental/cognitive aspects. These characteristics are demonstrated in the data in Table 6. The physical characteristics describe the physical effects of the anxiety which are, in effect, body changes that occur with the anxiety these students experience. Descriptions of these changes include, "suck in my breath and my heart starts beating," "hands get ice cold," and "mouth gets real thick." "Using my hands" when frustrated or physically shaking are other references that these students made to the physical changes that occur to them when they experience language learning anxiety.

These participants also present the emotional characteristics of anxiety which range from feeling uncomfortable, scared, and intimidated to feeling out of control, hostile, and stupid. (See Table 7). Denise describes her association of anxiety with helplessness:

The anxiety is closely associated with helplessness. When I'm helpless, there's no way I can remember this...Then your emotions are like, gosh, I could just kick myself. Way to go.

Table 6

Students' Perceptions of Characteristics of Anxiety

Physical Characteristics

Susan	I guess in class, it's the same thing. The more frustrated I get, the more I start using my hands. It's just a reflex.
Lisa	I try to give the appearance that I'm relaxed about things but I know on the inside I'm just going, shshshsh [physically shaking]...I just like suck in my breath and my heart starts beating and I go, oh my God, she's going to ask me.
Denise	My hands get ice cold and you know, all you can do is sit there, put your hands over your eyes, and go "Lord, please let me remember this."
Jake	[no comment]
Michael	[no comment]
Daniel	...leg twitches, restlessness, can't think straight got so many things...it's like kind of physically a smoker after about three days without cigarettes.

Table 7

Students' Perceptions of Characteristics of Anxiety

Emotional Characteristics

Susan	On the oral exams, I get angry, when I'm feeling stressed out about French, sometimes I do get angry at myself because I know that I could be doing better...Being out of control is not a very comfortable feeling.
Lisa	I just feel like, I guess, just stupid. I'm too embarrassed to ask. I'm too embarrassed to go, Can't you just say it in English just once?...It just makes you feel aggravated, because you know you read it. Why can't you remember it?...You just feel overwhelmed and you feel stupid, and...I just get pissed.
Denise	I'll never understand what they're saying...it's just real intimidating ...There's an overwhelming sense of...when you're intimidated, there's so much like instant defeat.
Jake	When that test is in front of you, you draw a blank. Then you get nervous and more nervous and more nervous, and you get this vicious cycle going on. I've seen times where I just started freaking out in confusion. It's a vicious cycle.
Michael	Everybody is out to get you when you're feeling defensive. I felt a little bit like I was being cornered and attacked, being singled out. Nobody wants to look like a fool. Everybody wants to look like they know what they're doing. It was obvious that I didn't, and I kind of got hostile with her a little bit because I felt like she was being extra hard on me...That made me mad.
Daniel	All of that's caused by the fear. Fear of failing because we are all afraid to fail...I guess that's normal because I'm a nervous wreck.

In some cases, these feelings are directed toward the teacher, the language, or the methodology. In other cases, they are directed toward oneself. The students' sense of vulnerability and lack of power or control is also relayed. Lisa relates her experience of anxiety as a sinking feeling:

I just feel completely lost. I just sit there with my mouth hanging open. I just feel like there's no way I can get this, and it's a real sinking feeling.

Moreover, the participants recount their experiences of the mental or cognitive effects of the anxiety they feel. (See Table 8). Memory loss is a common effect among these students, and they describe it in terms of a "white blank," "blocked out," "clueless," "stumbling around," and "draw a blank." Jake relates his process of worrying which leads to his memory loss:

It's like you're worrying so much about failure, that what you do know that may help you pass gets kind of shoved off in the corner somewhere and you don't pay any attention to what you really know, because you are so focused on what don't know.

These participants further describe a lack of concentration, an inability to focus, and a mind reeling effect when feeling anxiety. Daniel expresses his inability to focus on what the teacher is saying:

Fear, shock induced by fear. All these questions are going through your mind, what if, what if, what if, and when you have that much going through your mind, it's hard to get focused on one thing. For me it was hard to get focused on her voice...I had no clue to what she was talking about.

Table 8

Students' Perceptions of Characteristics of Anxiety

Cognitive Characteristics

Susan	It seems like when I'm under stress, when I really have to use language, I forget. I forget it.
Lisa	I just think I can't believe I just read this a couple of hours ago and I now I have no idea what it says...I mean like question questions, a million questions start running through my head.
Denise	It's just instant memory loss, and you can envision where it is on the page, but you can't figure for the life, tell what the word is. It's that white blank...I know I've talked about your mind just reels.
Jake	It's very important that I keep myself calm so that the words that I do know won't get blocked out because of all this anxiety and stress. Because then I'll really just forget everything...And the more frightened you get, the more you can't concentrate, the more you can't think.
Michael	I was on the spot, so I wasn't remembering it too well. So, I was trying to repeat it, and I was stumbling around.
Daniel	I couldn't really concentrate on it, which allows me not to understand her...I just couldn't follow what she was saying as long as I did in the class, during the class, and on the first test or any other time...if I've got too many other things on my mind, I can't study...Going a million miles a minute. I can't keep concentrated.

As a result, the effect of the language anxiety keeps these students from learning and performing in the foreign language context mindfully and coherently.

Assessment of Language Learning Anxiety and Development of Strategies to Deal with Language Learning Anxiety

Assessment of Language Learning Anxiety

At some point during the experience of their language learning anxiety, these students began to analyze what was happening to them, assessing why they were experiencing anxiety or why they were not learning or performing well. (See Table 9). The questions and the analysis brought forth by these students during their experience of anxiety, allow them to view their experience of language learning anxiety. The questions and analysis revealed in the data appear to range from general "feeling" questions to specific "detail" questions and appear to vary according to their language learning experience and their perception of themselves as language learners. For some of these students, these questions and the process of analysis involve the detailed and specific context in which these students experience their anxiety, and themselves in relationship to that context. Although she questions herself as a language learner, Lisa

Table 9

Students' Perceptions of Characteristics of Anxiety

Assessment of Language Learning Anxiety

Susan	I guess my sense of being an imposter comes in from getting the good grades and the stress that I feel over learning the language and how ignorant I feel coming up against the fact that I still manage to make good grades, makes me start justifying it to myself by saying that the teacher is really easy, which I think she is, and just make excuses for it.
Lisa	Things start going through my mind like what am I going to say? What am I going to ask? Was I paying attention? I don't know what she said. What am I going to say?...and I go am I the only one that is clueless on this? Is everybody else getting this, and I just don't understand?
Denise	Was the bulk going to be based on the questions?
Jake	Ask myself, well, recognize first of all, how I'm feeling. I'm scared. I'm worried. You got to recognize those feelings, and then start asking questions about, what are you scared about?...This is what is building. This is why I'm stressed out. So now I've recognized that, so what are you going to do about it?
Michael	How does this test my ability? [oral exam]
Daniel	I was just like, why didn't you study this? I mean why didn't you go over all the verbs you needed to? Why didn't you look over your vocabulary? You know, why, why, why.

also calls into question specific components of the language learning environment:

Is it the way it's taught? Is it the way I'm studying?
Is it the course? It just makes me have, I have a lot of questions...And I just think, you know, where is the problem? Is it me? Is it the course? Is it the teacher?

This assessment involves questions that pertain to specific aspects of the language learning environment. On the other hand, Jake provides an example of a general "feeling" assessment. He describes this assessment of his language learning anxiety as being an "honest dialogue:"

It's like a battle back and forth, constantly having to remind myself that, OK, you're smart, you can learn this...I also have to maintain that same idea, that learning a second language is not going to come so quickly, and that I just have to kind of relax and take it in small bites...Asking questions of myself as to why. Why do I feel this way?...Honestly answering those questions. And then dealing with, you know, the answers...it's like a dialogue going on with myself--a very honest dialogue, question and answering to sort some things out...It's the whole process, and you're part of the process.

For Jake, this assessment involves a general, yet honest dialogue with himself. The nature of this assessment is important considering the assessment gives rise to the strategies that these students devise in order to deal with their language anxiety. Daniel talks about this process:

I think the best way not to have anxiety is to be comfortable with what you've done, and, in order to do that, you have to stop when you first start off and say, is this what I need to do? and then you do it...when it comes time for something,...there won't be a problem with it.

The Strategies for Dealing with Anxiety

These students convey three means of dealing with the anxiety they experience with foreign language learning and the language learning environment. First, they have devised ways of gaining control of their environment and of their learning which alleviates anxiety. Secondly, these students demonstrate means of avoiding anxiety and its causes. Lastly, these students reveal means of giving up control of their learning and their learning environment.

Gaining Control

In order to alleviate their language anxiety, these students have found ways of gaining some measure of control of their language learning and their language learning environments. (Table 10 reveals these students' ways of gaining control.) Some of them look for ways of structuring their learning materials and ways to prepare themselves for participation in the language classroom. They look for some sense of structure and predictability in their language learning environment. Lisa describes a process of looking for structure with the methodology:

Then I have like a resolve. I go, well, OK, look. I can break it down. I can try to get the gist of it then I'll try to give an answer.

Some of them change their expectations of and attitudes toward language learning, putting the context and the material in perspective. Jake talks about his strategy of keeping things in perspective:

Table 10

Students' Strategies for Dealing with Language Learning Anxiety

Strategies for Gaining Control

Susan	First of all, to try to be prepared for this situation, and second of all, when all else fails, bring it in to control by putting myself, bringing myself back to a comfortable place which would be my own language.
Lisa	I always tried to stand next to someone I knew that knew what they were doing. So, I'd be like "OK now why is this?" and this person would explain it to me, and I'd be like "I get it," then I could do it.
Denise	Changing my attitude to not get frustrated, to have the attitude to accept the responsibility of things that I can be doing different, to really shift any kind of frustration or bitterness or anger or anything like that.
Jake	How can I incorporate it into my everyday life? I want it to become part of my everyday life. I don't want to take the class just to pass because it is a requirement for my undergrad work. I really want to learn it... When I think of it in terms of incorporating it into my everyday life. I just start to calm down.
Michael	I want to sit down and learn, you know, I'll sit down for an hour, and I want to learn all I need to know for the test, and then I'm finished. I don't want to look at it again.
Daniel	Listen very much, very attentively. Something that I've found out that works kind of well, when the teacher is reading out of the book which is 97 percent of the time...read along with her and...mouth the words.

If I learn one new word and consider that as a success, then I can take that positive response move on...spend my energy learning more new words and build on it...I just have to keep everything in perspective and have a clear understanding of what I know.

Some just "plow on through" their feelings of anxiety, dealing directly with the material. Daniel describes this strategy:

I just do it. I make myself. It comes out, my anxiety in the classroom comes out in the form of a stutter which I've learned to deal with just I've got to plow on through it, no matter how dumb it looks.

These students are assuming control of their learning and the context of that learning which facilitates their sense of competency and their sense of ability to learn and perform well, alleviating anxiety.

Avoiding Anxiety and Its Causes

Some of these students reveal different means of avoiding anxiety and its causes. (Table 11 provides some of the data on this avoidance behavior.) In the classroom, simply avoiding eye contact with the teacher or giving a look of "I don't know" allows a student to avoid having to provide an answer orally in class. Lisa begins to "feel" the teacher searching for a student to call on, she finds ways to avoid having to answer:

When she asks a question in French I just feel her searching around the room. I just like look down, or look confused, you know. I look like I don't know, and I think to myself, what am I going to say if she calls on me?

Table 11

Students' Strategies for Dealing with Language Learning Anxiety

Strategies for Avoiding Language Anxiety

Susan	[no comment]
Lisa	If I really don't know, the way I try to avoid her, is to let her know that I just don't have any idea.
Denise	[no comment]
Jake	I went home and got a punching bag, I was just...wop...wop...for about an hour just hitting the bag, the speed bag. Trying to relax, go to the park, go sit outside, go to the stream. One of my favorite activities to try to relax, watch the squirrels run up and down the tree...or go to the movies...go do something else.
Michael	I'm not going to blow all my other classes for this, so I just quit going to class, which is not something I do normally.
Daniel	It will come time for the final, and I won't probably start studying until about two in the morning.

Other students completely avoid their obligation to attend class or to do their language homework, and find ways to forget about this obligation by doing other activities. Daniel provides an example of this type of avoidance behavior:

I smoke a lot of cigarettes. I sleep. Tuesday night before the test, me and [friend's name] went bar-hopping until two in the morning...I try to get my mind off of it as much as I can, and then when I feel I'm ready to sit down and study, I do.

By avoiding performance or other requirements of the language class, these students alleviate some of their feelings of frustration and anxiety.

Giving up Control of Language Learning and Environment

Some of these students have given up control or the desire to control their language learning and language environment. (Table 12 illustrates the students' perceptions of this issue.) These students describe a loss of enthusiasm about language learning, a sense of apathy toward language learning and performance in the classroom, and giving only a bare minimum effort in class and outside of class. Hostility toward the teacher and cutting up in class characterize Michael's case of giving up control in language learning and in the classroom:

I guess the cutting up in class in last semester just kind of was the boiling point. I really didn't deal with it before that, except,...the typical things...just not being interested in class...just doing the bare minimum to try to get by.

Table 12

Students' Strategies for Dealing with Language Learning Anxiety

Strategies for Giving up Control

Susan	[no comment]
Lisa	I've just been so lost and I've just had so little motivation and so little help from my teachers and that sort of thing. I just don't care anymore...I just don't feel like I want to break my neck for it anymore. I just feel real apathetic towards it...Obviously, I don't have any idea how to pass the class.
Denise	When you're a little frustrated and real tired, you'll go, just forget this. Just forget it and I'll just rebel. I'll never learn it, so it's real easy to let your attitude get in the way of how you learn.
Jake	A lot of the enthusiasm started fading, and right now it is at an all time low...The enthusiasm came down because I started to get frustrated because I couldn't remember the words.
Michael	Every time you study, it goes in your mind, this sucks basically...I want to get it over with...it's not something I want to spend any time on...I kind of gave up learning it...I try to keep my 15% of classroom participation in...That's just whatever is asked of me...I turned in my homework. Tried to act like I was interested in class, went to class most of the time.
Daniel	I think the biggest problem I have is that I just never study, and that can cause some problems...you have more anxiety if you don't study because of the fact that you didn't study. It's not the language, it's just the fact that you didn't study.

Another case reveals God as the mechanism and facilitator of control in the language classroom and with learning. Denise recounts her interaction with God when she was in a stressful language learning situation:

"You see this, God? You promised this. Now I'm going to claim it. If you just help me out of this, I realize, Lord, I am a louse. It's my fault I'm in the position I'm in, but Lord, I could really use this right here." That's how God really is a resource for me.

This student has given up her sense of control to God through her faith that he will "extend His grace" to her, providing the means necessary to facilitate a good, responsible performance in the classroom. In one way or another, each of these students has given up the struggle for control because it has been this struggle that has led them to their experience of anxiety with language learning.

Consequently, by giving up the struggle for control, these students are able to alleviate some of the immediate anxiety they are experiencing. However, as previously demonstrated in the data, a sense of a lack of control in the language learning context facilitates the experience of language learning anxiety. Thus, giving up control will eventually bring the student back to experiencing the anxiety he/she was trying to alleviate. Hence, the student does not escape the vicious cycle of language learning anxiety by giving up control.

Summary

This chapter presents language learning anxiety in terms of a language learning anxiety model which was generated from the participants' perceptions of language learning anxiety. The data presented in this chapter reveals that the language learning anxiety experienced by language learners is a process which begins with the cause of this anxiety being a perception of a lack of control of language learning and of the language learning environment. The perception of a lack of control creates the effect of experiencing language learning anxiety. The experience of language learning anxiety leads to the assessment of the language learning context which, in turn, gives rise to the strategies used to deal with the experience of language learning anxiety.

It can be concluded in this data presentation that the student may be able to alleviate language learning anxiety by devising a strategy that enables a perception of gaining control of the language learning context. Therefore, the student who devises a strategy of giving up control or avoiding anxiety will eventually return to this experience of anxiety because it is the perception of a lack of control that leads to this anxiety.

Chapter Six

Summary and Implications

This chapter discusses the summary of findings, addressing the research questions posed in Chapters One and Three. In short, these findings discuss the students' beliefs about language learning that may lead to anxiety, the students' perceptions of their language learning anxiety, and the students' perceptions of their anxiety with relationship to language learning in a university classroom. Next, this chapter looks at this thesis study in the context of the literature on foreign language anxiety. Finally, this chapter concludes with implications for classroom practice as well as implications for further research.

The results of this study are not presented as the definitive answer to the nature of language learning anxiety, and language learning anxiety is not considered to be central to the experience of the language learner. Rather, language learning anxiety was the central focus of this particular qualitative study. Nevertheless, other issues pertaining to foreign language learning were anticipated and found present in the data. The perceptions of these university students not only gave some insight into the nature of language learning anxiety but, also, these perceptions raised the following language learning issues: what foreign language learning

meant to these students; how closely tied they felt to the process of language learning; how they saw themselves amongst their foreign language peers and teachers; and how they viewed themselves as students in general.

Research Questions and Findings

Along with their descriptions of their experience with language learning anxiety, these students' portrayed their experience of foreign language learning as a complex, idiosyncratic process. These students began their language learning process with preconceived notions of what learning a foreign language meant and of their own learning processes in general. They expressed initial enthusiasm toward learning a foreign language, believing that knowing a second language would be advantageous. Language learning was not only found to be difficult, challenging these students' sense of self and competency in their knowledge, their learning ability and their expression of ideas, but also, in some cases, language learning was found to be tedious and unrewarding. These perceptions of language learning led to a loss of enthusiasm toward language learning over time, and, in some cases, led to a desire to discontinue learning a foreign language.

Three research questions were investigated which provide insight into these students' perceptions of language learning and language learning anxiety.

What are students' beliefs about language learning that lead to anxiety about foreign language study?

The results of this study seemed to suggest that foreign language students have particular beliefs about the university language learning environment. These students have devised ways of learning and performing in other university classes that allow them to be successful and in control of those environments. The strategies that have proven successful in these university classes shape the expectations that these students have of their foreign language classes. However, the university foreign language classroom often does not meet these expectations. These students see their language classes as unfamiliar, unpredictable, and unstructured in comparison with other university classes, and this perception generates their sense of a lack of control in the language learning classroom. Their developed means of learning and performing for evaluation do not apply in many cases to language learning or the university language class. Since the application of their devised strategies for academic success and survival is not feasible in their language classes, these students are missing a sense of competency and comfort; therefore, they feel a lack of control which contributes to their language learning anxiety.

Although the findings of this study largely address students' perceptions of language learning anxiety, some insight was gained into the beliefs of foreign language

students about language learning. These students described an initial desire to learn the foreign language that they were required to study as part of their Arts and Sciences degree requirement. Some of these students expressed the initial belief that language learning is easy or would come naturally without much difficulty, so they anticipated being able to speak and understand the foreign language in a short period of time. Because some of these students have not achieved a high level of foreign language proficiency at the end of their required two-year foreign language study, they were disappointed with themselves and with the class. These students questioned why the university requires two years of foreign language study when they are not able to learn the language in two years, rendering their efforts unavailing. Also, some of these students expressed the belief that learning a foreign language would be like learning any other subject like science or history. These beliefs have led these students to the frustration they have experienced because they have discovered that language learning is not only a difficult, long and involved process, but also, it is unlike learning any other subject they have studied.

These students expressed some understanding of their own language learning processes. Although these descriptions tended to vary somewhat with the individual, this process appears to be governed by the university classroom requirements of participation and evaluation. Consequently,

one overriding theme in these students' descriptions of their language learning processes is that these students may develop strategies for learning based on the evaluation and assessment that are a part of their language learning environments. All of these participants were concerned about grades, so their study habits and learning strategies were geared toward their perceptions of what it takes to make a high grade. In fact, some of these students expressed the idea that they perceived language learning and making a good grade in their foreign language class as two different goals.

What are students' perceptions about anxiety?

The language learning anxiety experienced by these foreign language students has physical, emotional and cognitive characteristics that not only challenge their sense of comfort and competency in the language learning classroom but also are found to obstruct both their performance in the classroom and their process of language learning. These characteristics of language learning anxiety are the manifestations of lacking a sense of control of language learning and of the language learning environment. As stated in Chapter Five, the less control the student perceives, the more language learning anxiety the student is inclined to experience.

At some point during the experience of their language learning anxiety, these students made an assessment of what they were experiencing. These students described a process of

analyzing their language learning anxiety, assessing why they were experiencing anxiety or why they were not learning or performing well. The questions raised for this analysis by these participants appeared to range from general questions that asked, "How do I feel?" to specific questions that focused on specific aspects of the anxiety and language learning context. For some of these students, these questions and this process of analysis involved the specific components of the language learning context in which these students experienced their anxiety and themselves in relationship to that context. For others, this assessment involved a general analysis of the "feeling" self in the language learning context. These questions appeared to vary according to their language learning experience and their perception of themselves as language learners.

The nature of this assessment is of some consequence since it appears to give rise to the strategies that these students devised in order to deal with their language anxiety. The characteristics of these strategies are dichotomous. Those strategies that enabled the student to gain control appeared to allow the student to alleviate some language learning anxiety. Those strategies that gave up control tended to eventually lead the student back to language learning anxiety since the cause of this anxiety is the perception of a lack of control.

What are students' perceptions about anxiety in relationship to language learning in a university classroom?

First of all, the perception of a lack of control contributes to these students' language learning anxiety. This perception of a lack of control presented in this study comprises some of the interrelated and problematic characteristics of the university language classroom. According to the perceptions of the participants of this study, these problematic characteristics include the immediacy of the language learning environment; the students' perception of the language teacher; the perception of the language methodology; the perception of evaluation in the learning environment; as well as the perception of the relevancy of the language to each student personally. These issues are interrelated and provide the complexity for the sense of a lack of control these students have experienced.

Relationship to Literature

Since the study concerned foreign language learners' perceptions of the phenomenon of language learning anxiety, the findings of this study may provide an understanding of this phenomenon as a process which can be described in terms of a model of language learning anxiety (Chapter Five). The "Vicious Cycle" Model of language learning anxiety which was a product of this research study (Figure 1), provides a process-oriented way of viewing language learning anxiety,

which may offer a contribution to the literature on foreign language learning anxiety and on learning anxiety in general. Further, this study used a qualitative paradigm, thereby offering a potential contribution to the field of qualitative educational research on foreign language teaching and learning.

Unlike this thesis study, which described language learning anxiety as a process, most of the review of the language anxiety literature reviewed in Chapter Two) presented anxiety as a product of personality, context, and language learning. Language learning anxiety appears to be a product to be measured in the constructs of Trait-State and situation-specific anxiety paradigms, the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale*, and other anxiety scales discussed in Chapter Two. In other words, this review of the literature on foreign language anxiety in this study indicated that while there are anxiety scales that can be used to measure the anxiety levels of foreign language-anxious students, there is a dearth of research that provides a process-oriented approach to this phenomenon.

Furthermore, in the anxiety literature, anxiety is discussed both in terms of having facilitating and debilitating characteristics for language learners. In this thesis study, however, anxiety specific to a facilitating effect (i.e. anxiety that facilitates language learning) was not an issue generated by the perceptions of these students.

In fact, these students described their experiences with language anxiety as mainly debilitating. Even so, the researcher cautions that this study may contribute to the discussion of facilitating or debilitating anxiety only in a limited capacity since the effects of language learning anxiety were not measured and were not the focus of this study. Psychological considerations such as self-esteem, risk-taking, ego-boundaries, and inhibition that were reviewed in the literature in Chapter Two, were issues raised by some of the participants' perceptions in this study, but no issue was a prevailing theme in this study which could largely contribute to the literature on these psychological issues.

Nevertheless, one study in the literature found language learning anxiety as a process similar to what is described in this thesis study. Although there were some parallel findings with this study and Bailey's (1983) diary study (Chapter Two), which was also a study of a qualitative design, there were differences in the findings of these studies as well. Just as this thesis study gave rise to a model of language learning anxiety as a process, Bailey's conclusions show Language Classroom Anxiety and competitiveness as an interrelated process. Bailey posits a hypothesis of competitiveness and its relationship with anxiety which suggests that when the language learner sees himself/herself as less foreign language proficient than others, the

learner's competitiveness can cause and/or aggravate the learner's experience of Language Classroom Anxiety (Bailey). This thesis study indicates that when the language learner perceives himself/herself as having a lack of control of the language learning environment and/or of his/her language learning process, the language learner is apt to experience increased language learning anxiety. From her findings, Bailey asserts that the student feels a sense of competition with others in the class, so a sense of a lack of competency with these classroom others increases the language anxiety experienced. This thesis study's findings support the hypothesis that language students who feel a lack of competency, feel a lack of control, and it is this perception of a lack of control that increases language anxiety, not competition *per se*. In other words, competition may be a part of the feeling of incompetence for the language learner, but competition was not found to be a major issue for the participants of this thesis study.

The differences in the findings of these two studies could be the result of the differences in the means the data was procured for each study. Bailey (1983) was investigating diaries as her data, and this study examined interview transcripts. Whereas, a diary may feel more personal, safe and less time-restricted to its writer, causing its writer to be more uninhibited and reflective, an interview could be perceived as less "safe," and more "public," because of the

immediacy of the requested responses, causing the interviewee to be more reserved and less reflective.

Moreover, the participants of this thesis study were foreign language students whereas in Bailey's (1983) diary study, the participants were mostly language teachers who had become students, studying a foreign language. Intuitively, those language students who have been language teachers have the benefit of both experiences to provide a fuller, perhaps, more balanced perspective in their accounts of their language learning experiences than those students who have not been teachers. Since teacher/learners have this advantage, they may be more equipped to identify with better observational acuity what it is that is causing them anxiety. Whereas, the students in this thesis study reflected varied, yet somewhat limited, degrees of observational acuity of their language learning experiences.

The differences in the means the data was procured as well as the differences in the participants in each of these studies, could have impacted the dissimilarity in the results when comparing these studies. Perhaps further research, looking at both competitiveness and its relationship with anxiety, and control and its relationship with anxiety, could further explain the variance in these findings.

Implications for Classroom Practice

There are pedagogical benefits to consider. Anytime the voice of a learner can be heard by the ear of an educator,

the possibilities for pedagogical improvement increase immeasurably. Drawing from the practical experience, from concrete situations and relationships, leads to an understanding of these situations, which facilitates practical solutions, realistic answers to pedagogical questions that constantly arise. This research was intended for the purpose of equipping educators to understand with new insight that which may inspire new techniques, new ways of considering foreign language learners, and new ideas to consider for further research.

For students who are studying foreign languages or are considering the study of a foreign language, the findings of this study may lend some insight into their learning situations. Those students who are not able to develop anxiety lessening strategies that facilitate a sense of control of their language learning process or of their language learning classrooms may suffer in terms of grades, performance, and learning. Perhaps it is their inaccurate assessment of the language learning situation that leads them to ineffective strategies, keeping them on their "vicious cycle" of language learning anxiety, or perhaps it is an unwillingness to fully and accurately assess this environment. Language teachers can help these students assess their language learning context and anxiety by keeping an open dialogue with the students about their perceptions of control issues as described in the data presentation (Chapter

Five) and help them develop strategies for addressing these issues and others that may arise as a cause of language learning anxiety.

Nevertheless, the students in this thesis study presented different aspects of the university language learning environment that appeared to cause language students anxiety, and these aspects need to be considered for better classroom practice as well. First of all, the students in this study appeared to have preconceived conceptions of language learning paradigms, that is, ideas of what is typical of language learning courses. Such preconceptions may contribute to language students' sense of frustration and experience of anxiety when they meet the reality of the language classroom, and they find that foreign language learning is different than what they had anticipated. By with orientation and discussion of the reality of the language classroom with their students, teachers may be more in tune with some of the preconceived notions that students have of language learning courses so that they may ease some of their students' experience of frustration and anxiety in the language classroom.

Secondly, the fact that universities require students to study a foreign language for two years to fulfill a curriculum requirement causes some frustration for those students who may not see the relevancy of language study in their academic careers. Changes in the this language

requirement are a possible answer, but certainly not an answer that language teachers like to posit. Another possibility for addressing this issue that particularly pertains to the university environment would be to make the foreign language relevant by teaching useful language for particular language learning contexts so that students can relate to the language usage through their sense of relation to the context. However, what makes language relevant and useful to students is not an easily identifiable answer. The process of identification requires teachers' assessment of their students' particular language learning needs and context to understand what is relevant to these students. Of course, if teachers are not given the curricular flexibility necessary to make the language methodology adaptable and amenable to their students' needs, then making the language relevant to their students remains a difficult task for teachers.

Some teaching methodologies may provide more of a sense of relevancy in university language classes than others. The Communicative Approach or the Audio-Lingual Method (Larsen-Freeman, 1986) are possible examples, both having characteristics that the students in this thesis study have perceived as "ideal" and/or "typical" of usual language courses. (Some of these characteristics that were described in the data were verb tables, vocabulary lists, and dialogue skits.) However, some language classes in a university

setting use more innovative language teaching techniques such as an immersion method described by some of this study's participants. As found in this study, such innovative techniques could potentially intimidate both the language student who wants to learn the language and the language student who may not necessarily want to learn the language, but may be trying to fulfill a curriculum requirement while maintaining a good GPA. Using language methodologies that are similar to other subjects' teaching and learning methodologies may be less daunting for these language students, but the methodologies used in other university classes may lack the complex and creative interaction needed to learn a foreign language.

This is not to suggest, however, that innovative techniques should not be used in university environments. It is to suggest, though, that such innovative techniques do require some orientation for the student and some opportunity for an open dialogue between the teacher and the student about the innovative method throughout its use in the university classroom. Giving university students an option of the same language classes taught with different methodologies is another possible means of implementing some use of innovative methodologies in the university setting. Students could then feel some sense of control over their language learning by choosing the particular methodology they wanted

to try, thus, developing a possibly stronger desire to learn the foreign language.

Implications for Further Research

This study presents a model of language learning anxiety based on the perceptions of six university foreign language students. This model has the limitations of being derived from the perceptions of language learning anxiety of this particular group of people, and therefore, may lack generalizability to other groups of foreign language learners.

Whether or not the "Vicious Cycle" Model is found to be generalizable, it can be used as an instrument of comparison for other qualitative research studies focusing on foreign language anxiety, or, perhaps, anxiety in general. An example of such a study could be a longitudinal study that focuses on university foreign language students throughout their two-year language requirement. The findings of such a study could be compared to the findings of this thesis study and aid in the evolution of the "Vicious Cycle" Model. Other studies with more participants, with a less diverse group of participants (e.g., all women, or all men), or with younger or older participants, would provide interesting results for comparison with the findings of this thesis study. Consequently, research using other groups of participants for comparison as well as research to test the generalizability of the "Vicious Cycle" Model could provide further insight

into this model's description of this phenomenon, and could lead to a fortified theory of language learning anxiety.

Furthermore, this study has shed some light on the nature of students' assessment of their language learning processes and of their experiences with language learning anxiety. Better understanding of this assessment can only be gained through research that focuses on these assessment practices of language learners. This understanding could more adequately equip language teachers to enable students to develop strategies that would alleviate their language anxiety.

Conclusion

Based on the perceptions of the foreign language students who participated in this thesis study, what appears to be important to foreign language students is that they are able to have some of control of their language learning process and environment. Language teachers could facilitate some of this sense of control by keeping an open dialogue with their students, either through dialogue journals, short meetings before and after class or by setting aside some class time to talk about difficulties, anxieties, and language learning needs and strategies in general. This type of immediacy of teacher/student interaction enables the immediate needs and anxieties of the language learner to be

better understood and addressed, fostering the language learner's sense of control and achievement in the language learning environment and with learning a foreign language.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Form B

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. Identification of Project

Date: 3/17/93

Principal Investigator:

Melissa Connolly

Address and phone number of PI:

1616 Clinch Avenue
Apartment #4
Knoxville, Tn. 37916
(615) 637-7644

Title of project: The Experience of Foreign Language
Learning Anxiety of Level 1 and 2
Learners of Foreign Languages

Department: College of Education, Department of
Curriculum and Instruction

Starting date: As soon as the review of this research
project is complete and the project is
accepted.

Estimated completion date: August 1993

External funding agency and identification number: N/A

Grant submission deadline: N/A

II. Objective(s) of Project(s)

The objectives of this qualitative research study are (1) to identify the any anxiety experienced by level 1 (first year) and 2 (second year) foreign language learners while learning a foreign language; (2) to identify the possible causes of and adaptation to foreign language learning anxiety; (3) to identify the effects of foreign language learning anxiety on the foreign language learner. The importance of this study lies in the understanding of the experience of language learners. This understanding can be met through the qualitative design of this study. Certainly, the issue of foreign language learner anxiety has been discussed in the literature on language anxiety. By applying a phenomenologically based interpretation of the experience of the foreign language learner to pedagogical considerations, the needs of the foreign language learner are more apt to be met with appropriate pedagogy and further action research on the subject.

III. Description of subjects

The subjects are six university students taking foreign language classes at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Two of these students will be at level 1 of their foreign language study, and the remaining four will be at level 2. Potential subjects (participants) will be identified by a process of reviewing the students currently taking level 1 or 2 foreign language classes at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville during the spring semester and extending invitations to these students to participate in the study. All participation will be voluntary.

IV. Methods or Procedures

Data will be collected by personal interviews and classroom observations. Each participant will be interviewed prior to a single classroom observation then interviewed following this observation. The interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. The classroom observations will be conducted by the researcher and recorded by handwritten notes. All participants will remain anonymous for the written presentation of their voluntary contributions to this study and their involvement with this research in general. The interviews and classroom observations will be scheduled at the convenience of the participants, in locations suitable to their needs.

Each participant will be asked to sign a release form and discuss open-ended questions about their perceptions of foreign language learning anxiety. Participation is voluntary, subjects may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time.

The written consent forms will be obtained before the interviews are conducted. The consent forms will be sealed and locked under file by the researcher. The audio-tapes and transcripts will be ascribed pseudonyms. All consent forms, audio-tapes, handwritten notes and transcripts will be locked under file at the home of the researcher Melissa Connolly, 1616 Clinch Ave. Apt.#4, Knoxville, Tennessee, 37916 for a period of three years as is required by federal regulations and The University of Tennessee Research with Human Subjects Guidelines. After three years, the audio-tapes, handwritten notes, and transcripts will be destroyed. The tapes will be made available only to the researcher Melissa Connolly and her advisor, Dr. Patricia Davis-Wiley, and a transcriptionist who will know only the pseudonyms that identify the recorded responses, not the actual names of the participants.

The audio-tapes are necessary to obtain an accurate record of the responses from the interviews and are useful in capturing the participants' tone and inflection which may give additional meaning to their responses. These tapes may provide data for an additional study; however, a release form would be obtained from each of the participants before such an additional study would begin.

The data will be analyzed by an inductive process. Through analysis, the data will give rise to categories which will be coded. The categories will fall into identifiable patterns and the relationships between these patterns will be considered as themes of the data. Such themes could be further considered as possible hypotheses for further research. This process of analysis will be conducted following the guidance provided by Dr. Kathleen Bennett deMarrais and the publications by Glense and Peshkin (1992), Wolcott (1990), and Van Manen (1990) that focus on a qualitative research paradigm.

V. Specific Risks and Protection Measures

This research poses no possible risks in the participants. I intend as the researcher to keep the strictest confidentiality of all information obtained from my observations and interviews, and I intend to make the participants have absolute certainty that this is so. I want my participants to feel confident in the research and in me as the researcher to address the issues relevant to the study as accurately as all parties involved deem possible (including participants and committee members) without jeopardizing any of the participants' sense of well-being. At no time should the participants of the study perceive a possible risk that hinders their well-being. Participation is voluntary, and any participant can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

VI. Benefits vs. Risks

The benefits that arise from this type of research are many fold.

(1) For students who are studying foreign languages or considering the study of a foreign language, the the themes that unfold in this study could lend some insight into their own learning situation allowing them to feel a sense of comradery as well as empathy with other foreign language learners. Unreal expectations that may possibly disrupt the foreign language learning process can be met with the practical reality of other students' experience of learning a foreign language. Since there are no risks greater than the establishment of a sense of well-being for all concerned, the benefits far outway any risks.

(2) There are pedagogical benefits to consider. Anytime the voice of a learner can be heard by the ear of

an educator the possibilities for pedagogical improvement increase immeasurably. Drawing from the practical experience, from concrete situations and relationships, lends understanding to practical solutions, realistic answers to pedagogical questions that constantly arise. This research is intended the purpose of equipping educators with understanding, with new insight that may inspire new techniques, new ways of considering foreign language learners, and new ideas to consider for further research.

(3) As a researcher, I would like to consider this research a contribution to the literature on foreign language learning anxiety and on learning anxiety in general. Also, I would like to contribute to the field of educational research using a qualitative paradigm, hence, contributing to the field of qualitative research in general.

VII. Methods of Obtaining Informed Consent from Subjects

All participation will be voluntary. Each student volunteering to participate will be asked to sign a written consent form. These consent forms will be locked under file at the home of the researcher Melissa Connolly, 1616 Clinch Avenue, Apartment #4, Knoxville, Tennessee 37916.

VIII. Qualifications of the Investigator

The investigator (researcher) Melissa Connolly is a graduate student at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in the Department of Education, Curriculum and Instruction specializing in Foreign Language/ English as a Second Language Education. She has conducted similar research studies to fulfill class requirements for C&I 517, Trends and Issues; C&I 560, Qualitative Research; and Linguistics 471, Sociolinguistics. Currently, the investigator participates in a qualitative research seminar under the direction of Dr. Kathleen Bennett deMarrais.

IX. Adequacy of Facilities to Support Research

N/A

X. Responsibility of Project Director

Dr. Patricia Davis-Wiley will review this form and oversee the research project in its entirety.

To comply with the policies established by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville Committee on Research Participation, the principal investigator solidly adheres to the principles stated in the "The Belmont Report" and to the highest standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

A. Approval will be obtained from the University Committee on Research Participation prior to instituting any change in the research project deemed necessary by the Principle Investigator or the Project Director.

B. Development of any unexpected risks will be reported to the University Committee on Research Participation.

C. A status report (Form D) will be submitted at 12-month intervals or as requested with information regarding the current status of the research project.

D. Signed consent statements will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter.

APPENDIX B

Foreign Language Study Questionnaire

What foreign language(s) are you studying?

How long have you studied this(these) foreign language(s)?

Have you taken a foreign language prior to the foreign language course(s) you are now taking?

yes --What Language(s)? no

In high school?

yes --How long? no

In college?

yes --How long? no

Do you ever experience difficulty with your foreign language study that you don't with other courses?

yes --please explain below no

Do you experience particular anxiety studying foreign language(s)?

yes --please explain below no

Would you be interested in participating in a study by expressing your experience of foreign language anxiety (one hour approximate participation time)?

yes --please answer below no

name _____

tele.# _____

best time to call _____

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

I understand that the purpose of this research project is to understand the experience of anxiety for first and second year foreign language students.

I understand that my participation involves an audio-taped interview and that my audio-tape recorded responses will remain strictly confidential. Pseudo names will be used to identify transcripts of the data generated by the interviews and the researcher's notes.

I understand that my participation in this research is completely voluntary. I may withdraw from participation or refuse to answer specific questions at any time without penalty. I understand that I do not need extra preparation to participate in the research since the research is designed simply to draw from my experience as a foreign language learner. I understand that the researcher does not expect any personal risks for me as a participant in the research. The personal benefit to me for my participation is the opportunity to share my perceptions and insights, and to make suggestions that contribute to a worthwhile cause.

I understand that I can contact my researcher at any time if I have any questions about my participation in the research project or anything concerning the research project in general. The researcher is Melissa Connolly and can be contacted at the following address and phone number:

University of Tennessee
Department of Education, Curriculum and Instruction
218 Claxton Education Building
Knoxville, Tennessee 37916
(615) 974-2431

I have read this consent form and understand what my involvement in this research study entails. I agree to participate in this research study.

Name (Type or Print)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

Foreign Language Anxiety Interview Schedule

Interview Questions:

If a friend were to ask you advice about taking a foreign language, what would you tell them?

Think back to the time before you began to study a foreign language, how did you perceive foreign language learning?

Think about a time when you experienced foreign language anxiety and describe what it was like?

(probe) what does anxiety feel like?

(probe) what caused this feeling?

(probe) Do you consider yourself an anxious person in general?

Tell me about how you dealt with your anxiety.

Tell me about a time when you felt anxiety alleviated in the classroom.

Tell me about your own process of language learning.

(probe) what works for you when studying a language/ what doesn't?

Tell me about your participation in the study of this foreign language.

(probe) in the classroom; with study materials; with study partners; etc.

VITA

Melissa Anne Connolly was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on February 17, 1966. She attended elementary and junior high schools in the local school districts of Dayton, Ohio until 1980. She moved to Knoxville, Tennessee and attended Farragut High School from which she graduated in 1984. She attended The University of Tennessee, Knoxville and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology with an emphasis in Linguistics in 1991. She reentered The University of Tennessee, Knoxville for a Master of Science degree in Curriculum and Instruction, Foreign Language Education, with an emphasis in qualitative research, and received her degree in August, 1995. Melissa has published an article in *Tennessee Education*, in the Fall of 1992 entitled, "School Choice: The Perceptions of Parents Who Home School Their Children," and she has presented papers at annual conferences and symposiums that address the needs and issues of language learners. She has taught English as a Second Language to foreign high school students as well as to adult foreign students in the university setting. She is currently teaching at the English Language Institute at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.