

琉球大学学術リポジトリ

Language Learning Anxiety: Stereotypes Affecting Non-Standard ESL Learners

メタデータ	言語: 出版者: 琉球大学法文学部国際言語文化学科欧米系 公開日: 2021-01-04 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Goya, Hideki メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/47625

Language Learning Anxiety: Stereotypes Affecting Non-Standard ESL Learners

Hideki Goya

Introduction

The various factors that determine the quality of second language (L2) learning have been investigated in the field. These factors include preference of learning methods, learning strategies, location, time of learning, and more. In general, it is likely that most of the factors are potentially under the teacher's control (Harmer, 2007). In other words, the teachers usually decide what methods to employ, what strategies to use, and where and when to teach the target language in order to assist the learners in gaining a good grasp of L2 knowledge. Yet, the learner's language learning anxiety is undoubtedly an exception (Harmer, 2007). That is, it is considerably difficult for language teachers to mitigate the causative psychological factors among less experienced instructors (Makey et al., 2004). As a consequence, it has been a challenge for language teachers to provide a more comfortable and effective learning environment for the L2 learners (Harmer, 2007).

For the above reason, it has been well discussed that English as second language (ESL) learner's anxiety is a psychologically detrimental factor that would affect the learner's daily ways of thinking (e.g., Marx, 2001). The previous studies contended that anxiety is one of the key factors that affect the quality of language learning; hence, it is considered a serious concern for successful second language acquisition (SLA) (Chen, 1999; Krashen, 1985).

Although many researchers widely recognized the negative aspect of learning anxiety at academic settings where L2 learning is taking place, we actually know little about how anxiety affects non-standard ESL learners. The non-standard ESL learner is defined in the current study as those who are learning English in order to acculturate in the target community but not participating in any academic institutions like college or university programs. In other words, they are living in a community in which English is a means of communication and taking ESL classes provided in the community. They have the desperate necessity of learning English to communicate with others for many reasons. Thus, it is our hope that analyzing the anxiety in this circumstance would add new insights into the general understanding of the complicated mechanism of SLA in relation to the psychological and socio-cultural aspects of language learning.

Theoretical Background

To date, a substantial number of research has investigated the systematic mechanism of SLA with regards to various learner-oriented factors such as age, psychological and sociological factors, learner's first language, and social interaction (e.g., Dornyei, 2003). Among the possible factors, the relationship between ESL learner's anxiety and the associated context has been of great interest in the field. Specifically, the L2 learners' actual participation in social interactions and the anxiety that comes from these interactions has increasingly drawn much attention, which led to the insightful investigation on SLA in relation to social contexts (Chen, 1999; de Mas & Ryan, 2001; Marx, 2001; Peirce, 1994).

As a widely accepted definition, learning anxiety is the

subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Horwitz et al., 1986). In a series of influential theories in SLA, Krashen (1985) proposed the Affective Filter Hypothesis with regards to the extent to which the learner's anxiety relates to learning. The underlying premises suggest that the level of the learning anxiety would determine how high (or low) the mental filter could become, which in turn would affect successful language learning. For instance, fear of making mistakes when communicating in the target language would prevent the L2 speakers to acquire the language because of anxiety. In other words, if the mental filter is high due to the learner's increased anxiety, it is less likely that the acquisition of L2 knowledge will take place. In this sense, as the Affective Filter hypothesis claims, such emotional blockage is the essential key that determines whether the input of L2 knowledge can be comprehended, which in turn facilitates the acquisition of L2 (Krashen, 1985). In short, learning anxiety plays a significant role in blocking successful SLA. In line with Krashen, Horwitz et al. (1986) similarly pointed out that the psychological role of anxiety associated with language learning could cause an absolute blockage of learner's language learning, which became a recent consensus in the field.

Despite this widely accepted view, however, the unattested belief is that not only might language anxiety be detrimental in SLA for both teachers and learners, but also it might adversely serve as facilitative; this might enrich language learning (Oya et al., 2004; Piniel, 2006). That is, a certain level of anxiety may be necessary for the facilitative effects. In this regard, Oya et al. (2004) conducted a study to clarify the belief with respect to the relationship between learner's anxiety and oral performance of L2 to see if there would be

any positive influence in the relationship. Seventy-three native speakers of Japanese voluntarily participated in their study. Yet, as opposed to their initial hypothesis, the study only found negative effects. More specifically, language learning anxiety seemed to limit L2 language learning, such as allowing fewer items to be available, resulting in poor organization and slowing down the speed of accessing the lexicon to retrieve items. Thus, Oya et al. (2004) concluded that anxiety had nothing but a detrimental impact on comprehending input, processing L2, and generating output. In short, a learner's anxiety intervenes in L2 learning, and the positive evidence that would possibly facilitate L2 learning has been scarcely observed in the previous research (Oya et al., 2004).

In order for successful L2 learning to take place in the foreign language classroom, it is necessary to identify what accelerates the L2 learners' learning anxiety (Daley et al., 1999). To date, several studies insightfully examined what types of causes would be more likely to occur in the L2 learning settings and how they would directly affect L2 learning (Chen, 1999; Daley et al., 1999; Horwitz et al., 1986; Oya et al., 2004). Horwitz et al. (1986) classified three performance-oriented causative factors in detail: "communication apprehension," "test anxiety," and "fear of negative evaluation." First, communication apprehension is related to the learners' disposition of being too shy to communicate with others. Second, test anxiety is a fear of failure as a result of poor performance when the learners take higher stakes tests. The third type of anxiety is a fear of negative evaluation; the learners have a fear of being evaluated negatively by others due to their poor performance (Horwitz et al., 1986).

In addition to the above classifications, other studies tangibly attempted to account for the effect of social interaction in relation to

the fear of negative evaluation. Specifically, according to Chen (1999), socio-cultural interactions would raise learning anxiety in relation to negative experiences in the target culture such as culture shock, social isolation and alienation, and racial discrimination and prejudice. Negative experiences in the host culture occur to most ESL learners because, generally speaking, it is different from their indigenous culture (Chen, 1999). Specifically, when ESL learners who participated in Chen's research attempted to settle in a new country, they went through acculturation difficulties that resulted in increasing social isolation despite their continuous efforts. In addition, they experienced anxiety from other important aspects like racial prejudice and negative stereotyping (Chen, 1999). For instance, regardless of the level of consciousness towards such judgmental thoughts, the majority of native speakers in the study considered non-native learners to be a minority. From that point of view, it had been demonstrated that any kind of racial discrimination, prejudice, and negative stereotypes were commonly and widely found in the host culture, and these factors tended to result in generating serious learning anxiety for those learners who were somehow mistreated in their own communities. Chen stated that experiencing negative social interaction on a basis of mistreatments by the dominant native speakers would drastically lower self-esteem and self-confidence of the L2 learners. In other words, such negative interaction in social context would cause serious psychological problems and generate a negative impact on the learner's language learning. In short, the learning anxiety consequently grows as the learners are exposed to such negative social interaction (Chen, 1999; de Mas & Ryan, 2001; Marx, 2001).

Furthermore, in Pierce's (1994) study, he demonstrated that the interaction that took place in an ESL setting would have a significant

impact on a learner's self-confidence in their linguistic ability. Particularly, Pierce (1994) pointed out the importance of social interactions in a community where ESL learners were residing. The study was based on data collected from five immigrant female ESL learners whose L2 proficiencies were at the intermediate to advanced level. Pierce argued that an imbalanced social relationship between interlocutors might be connected with the social context in which language learning took place. Specifically, Eva, who was working in a restaurant in Canada where her co-workers were native English speakers at the time of investigation, gave a good example of the extent to which imbalanced social relationships detrimentally affected her willingness to communicate at work. Due to such an imbalanced relationship, her discourse with these native speakers broke down. More specifically, in general, Eva was eager to interact with "Anglophones" to practice her English and to enhance her language skills (Pierce, 1994). But, when Eva admitted a lack of knowledge of the television character Bart Simpson, she was positioned as someone who was strange, someone who did not have cultural knowledge that was supposed to be well known (Pierce, 1994). Needless to say, due to her lack of the idea of who "Bart Simpson" was, she was underestimated by her co-workers. Consequently, Eva fell into underestimating herself because of this negative interaction. Then she did not want to respond to others in conversation; instead, she chose to be silent because she was too humiliated despite her willingness to communicate with native speakers (Pierce 1994).

Keeping the above in mind, Pierce concluded that native speakers tended to decide whether the learners were worth listening to, and the learners tended to decide whether the native speakers were worth speaking to in accordance with social situations (1994).

That is, in a certain social context, the discourse tends to be affected by negative interaction among interlocutors from the beginning (Pierce, 1994). Furthermore, it is argued that negative interactions in social context would hinder L2 learners from successful L2 knowledge application and slow down learner's interlanguage development in the language classroom as well as in the authentic world surrounding them (i.e., their own community). Likewise, Daley et al. (1999) argued that when language learners underestimated themselves, anxiety incrementally increased, and anxiety started causing difficulties in language learning. In short, L2 learners mistreated by native speakers of the target language through negative interactions tended to have more learning anxiety, which caused language-learning difficulty in any context (Marx, 2001).

So far, the previous research showed that negative interaction in social context affected the ESL learner's language learning anxiety. However, from a different perspective, the learner's own negative view or stereotype also seems to be one of the critical factors that play a detrimental role in language learning in the targeted community. In particular, some studies showed the effect of this harmful mindset on language learning through negative interactions. Such view is well accepted in foreign language learning classes; an imbalanced relationship between native speakers and non-native speakers in a community is a deteriorate factor to establish rich environment (Pica, 1997).

For instance, de Mas and Ryan (2001) carried out a socio-cultural study on a factor of negative interaction in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning context, especially the negative stereotype. Such a learner-oriented factor is a biased view on the targeted culture or community that learners subconsciously possessed.

The study found that the negative stereotypes towards the host culture were detrimental among ESL learners, and it also played a negative role in understanding native speakers as well (de Mas & Ryan, 2001). More specifically, in their qualitative research, de Mas and Ryan demonstrated how and why L1 Spanish learners of English in Mexico stereotyped Americans in terms of political and cultural aspects. That is, from the data collected in a Mexican university, both negative and positive stereotypes were found among Mexican learners of English toward the United States. Particularly, the interviewees viewed North Americans as "imperialists" (de Mas & Ryan, 2001: p. 10); the students were supposed to learn English because it is widely spoken in the world for various reasons. Such idea gave the students oppressive pressure to learn English rather than other languages, which made them defensive towards their own culture. In addition, de Mas and Ryan also clearly pointed out how these stereotypes would influence both learners and teachers, which would in turn negatively impact ESL learning context from pedagogical points of view. In this regard, the previous studies made it clear that ESL learners naturally possess negative stereotypes towards native speakers of English regardless of their culture and political views (de Mas & Ryan 2001).

Similar to this point and even more surprisingly, language teachers also tend to possess particular judgmental views towards ESL learners (Marx, 2001). Marx collected data from nine European American female participants who were teaching and tutoring minority students in school as pre-service teachers in the United States. Specifically, Marx's study focused on the teacher's subconscious stereotyping towards non-European American students and demonstrated how negative interaction based on negative mindsets would affect the teacher's perception of the minority students. Marx

interestingly introduced demographic numbers of teachers and learners in grade schools in the U.S. He estimated that in the U.S. today, 86 percent of the teacher workforce (Lara, 1994) and the population of education students consist of European American (Ladson-Billing, 1999). Furthermore, 72 percent of the overall teaching population is females (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). Collectively, it is concluded that European American females sufficiently represent the dominant face of American teachers (Marx, 2001). On the other hand, as far as the learner's population is concerned, it seems rather contradictory. That is, nearly 50 percent of the learners are minorities (Lara, 1994), and its population is drastically increasing two and a half times faster than the rate of the general student population growth (Clair, 1995).

With regards to the above demographic data, Marx (2001) strongly emphasized that negative mindsets such as racial prejudice and negative stereotype primarily existed in learning communities, although all participants undoubtedly claimed to be open-minded, generous to any child, and even antiracist in the interview. More importantly, such negative mindset towards English learning children of minorities was not conscious among the interviewees (i.e., ESL teachers) although it still critically influenced their ways of understanding children's beliefs, cultures, languages, academic capabilities, ways of living, and so on. What is more interesting is, according to Marx's investigation, that the teachers tended to conceive such culturally-oriented differences as the learner's deficit and incivility without considering the fact that they were actually stereotyping negatively.

As clearly seen above, the negative mindsets that both ESL teachers and L2 learners in language classrooms possess are one of the most critical determinate causes of learners' anxiety. Specifically,

what directly relates these negative mindsets to learning anxiety is, one can easily suppose, negative interactions that are based on such mindsets blindly existing among the language teachers. Consequently, this negatively impacts the discourse in which L2 learners are willing to practice their English with native speakers in the host culture. As a result, the failure in social interactions with native English speakers harmfully impacts language learning to a large degree. Thus, there is no doubt that awareness of blind mindsets is one of the essential keys to manage language-learning anxiety in the language learning classroom (Chen 1999; de Mas & Ryan 2001).

To recap, the previous research sufficiently demonstrated the overall picture of language leaning anxiety that has a significant relationship to social interaction. A substantial number of empirical studies found how harmful mindsets of both teachers and learners affect learning context (Chen 1999; de Mas & Ryan, 2001; Pierce, 1994). It is clear that social interactions have a great impact on language learning anxiety, especially in a case of L2 learning (e.g., Chen, 1999; de Mas & Ryan, 2001; Marx, 2001). Considering the importance of the subconscious negative mindset of the learners that affects successful L2 teaching and learning, it is worth investigating such predisposition to raise sufficient awareness of its detrimental effects. Yet, this has been taken for granted in the studies, which presses more needs of investigation. Furthermore, not surprisingly, the majority of studies mentioned above included ESL learners at the intermediate level or above who belong to the academic ESL/EFL setting. In contrast, we know little about how the learners' own negative mindsets would affect social interaction where a non-standard ESL learner at the beginning level is involved. To fill in the identified gap among the previous literature, more research is needed,

especially to investigate the extent to which the negative mindset would affect such learners who aim to acculturate into the target culture. Taking the own causative mindsets into consideration, this study aimed to provide integral investigation that would potentially inform language teachers and learners on how to mitigate unnecessary anxiety of any types of L2 learners. This would, in turn, help them manage language learning anxiety in order to accomplish successful learning in any context.

In order to guide the investigation, the current study addressed a general research question to shed more lights on learning anxiety in the ESL context. That is, to what extent does social interaction affect the non-standard ESL learners' language learning anxiety? More specifically, the study investigated how L2 learning anxiety actually increases in the learners' social life in which they have to communicate to survive as well as when there is no choice in making a deliberate effort to use L2.

A Case Study of L2 Learning Anxiety

With the guiding question in mind, the overall purpose of the present study was to seek the most critical factors that might make a significant impact on the actual discourse where non-standard ESL learners and native speakers of English partook in social interactions. To scrutinize the social interaction and psychological effects, the data was collected from a diary written by a Japanese female English learner in L1. It was our hope that the study adequately would illuminate the raised L2 learning anxiety in an imbalanced relationship among interlocutors. As far as the content is concerned, the participant commented over the actual discourse where she was

involved. The data analysis was qualitatively carried out based on translations made by the investigator to interpret general characteristics of the ESL learner's anxiety with rich descriptions.

Instrument

Since L2 learning anxiety is an abstract concept of an internal psychological and subjective feeling (Horwitz et al., 1986), it is not easy to examine at all. According to Horwitz et al., they used one of the experimental instruments designed to incorporate L2 learning anxiety. Yet, the study was partially done for a French class's anxiety. Thus, there is no full-fledged instrument specifically aiming at measuring the level of L2 learning anxiety from a quantitative point of view. To solve the methodological issue in the current investigation, qualitative research has been conducted using the language learner's diary for qualitative analysis (Howell-Richardson & Parkinson, 1988). Likewise, in Pierce's research, examining the learner's diary was used to describe the learner's autonomy and emotional perception that occurred when learners attempted to fit themselves into their target culture. Considering the validity of the instruments implemented in the precious research, it was easily assumed that such qualitative methodology shed more lights on the issue. It was also our hope that examining her thoughts at various occasions involving different discourses in a longitudinal manner would elicit causative effects of social interactions on a basis of the learner's negative mindsets. For the above reason, substantial data was collected from the learner's diary in the present study over eight weeks.

Participant

To conduct a case study in a qualitative design, a female Japanese English learner (aged 30), "Kana," who had completed six years of learning English in compulsory education, voluntarily participated in the study. After her graduation from high school, she did not practice English on a daily basis for ten years until she came to the United States with her spouse and two children (ages five and three). By the time of this study, Kana had been in the U.S. for one year and had been taking ESL English conversation classes at the local library for two hours a week. Her English proficiency was at the beginning level in terms of productive skill (i.e., speaking), although her receptive (i.e., listening) skill was seemingly a bit more advanced.

Procedure

After receiving specific instructions with regards to keeping a diary, the participant agreed to voluntarily take part in the case study and started to keep entries in the diary every day retrospectively over eight weeks. She was asked to write a paragraph describing her feelings whenever she had social interaction with native and non-native English speakers. Kana was allowed to keep her diary both in Japanese and English because of her writing level and also because of the purpose of this study. That is, the main focus was not how much she learned but how she felt toward a certain learning context in relation to negative social-cultural interaction. For this purpose, Kana's diary was used to investigate the situation when language-learning anxiety occurred in the social context.

Silence in Negative Interaction

When Kana had a negative interaction with native speakers, she was rather eager to remain silent because she assumed the discourse was based on the native speaker's racial prejudice towards her. For example, one day, when Kana took her daughter (age three) to school, she had to communicate with native speakers. She felt uncomfortable towards her daughter's teachers because the teachers did not reply to her when she tried to talk about something regarding her daughter. She decided not to speak to the teachers because she was discouraged and lost her motivation to communicate with native speakers due to this negative experience. This experience made her erroneously assume that the reason why they did not reply to her was because the teachers knew that she could not speak English well and also because she was Japanese. According to her diary entry:

Excerpt 1

I can't stay in conversation unless the persons whom I am talking to don't look down on me and enjoy themselves with me. To keep talking to someone who doesn't smile at all to me is almost torture. I would rather not talk to anyone in that situation.

It is impossible to identify the cause of such negative interaction. The teachers might simply be too busy for their duties; nonetheless, Kana felt she was mistreated, and she felt more comfortable in remaining silent rather than trying to continue in that imbalanced relationship in the discourse.

In another example, Kana also often felt neglected when she and her daughters tried to play with children of native speakers in the playground near her apartment. The native speaker's father seemed

unhappy when his children were playing with her daughters. Every time she and her daughters were about to interact with the children of the native speaker, their father halted the interaction and asked his children to come back to him. Kana wrote:

Excerpt 2

Is this because we are Asians? Every time I saw him, he didn't smile at all and unhappy to see us playing in the same playground with his children. This neglecting depressed me a lot. He never said anything to us. However, I can strongly tell that he is not happy with us according to his attitude. That makes me feel as if we were completely alone here even though we see many people now. I should ignore them from the next time.

To her, it looked as if he were trying to avoid any social contact not only between parents (i.e., the father and Kana) but also between their children. Those negative interactions were probably based on her own negative mindsets, which consequently and critically lowered her motivation to interact with native speakers. The previous daunting experience grew larger and affected the next one. In turn, the negative spiraling interaction eventually harmed Kana's self-confidence, which led Kana to make less effort in practicing her English under these difficult circumstances. This is in line with "Eva" in Pierce's (1994) study. That is, Eva fell into under-estimating herself because of this negative interaction and she chose to be silent because she was too humiliated despite her willingness to communicate with native speakers (Pierce 1994).

Similarly, there is another example of Kana's negative experience that raised her anxiety. Once in a while, Kana took an exercise class in a sport facility that was usually full of European

American females. Due to her previous negative experiences, Kana already had a negative stereotype of white females, and she even had a fear towards them. For instance, sometimes when she said "hello" to her classmates, she felt as if she were neglected and received no response. Kana wrote, "White people usually look so mean to us. Every time when I was in class, no white female tried to respond to me unless they were senior citizens or other ethnics." She also wrote about a situation where native speakers belittled her family:

Excerpt 3

They are looking at my children with disdain. I don't know why they gave us such a cruel looking. Fortunately, my daughters are still too young to notice it. Especially, white people are so cruel to us compared to other ethnics.

It is surely possible to assume that there might be different causative factors behind this negative social interaction such as an individual native speaker's previous experiences with Asians or that the speaker has simply had a bad day. Yet, Kana strongly believed that this was due to her marginalized social status as an Asian in a different culture. Therefore, Kana chose to remain silent when she felt unsecure in such social contexts despite her willingness to communicate with native speakers in English. Her view on Americans might be similar to the view the Mexican university students had in de Mas and Ryan's study (2001). The dominated feeling created by the native speakers in the activity led to stereotyped views of the native speakers of English, which made Kana too defensive to be open minded towards the community she was trying to acculturate. In short, her negative stereotypes towards the native speakers of English influenced her willingness to communicate in the community.

Deliberate Effort to Stay in Discourse

As seen above, unfortunately, due to her insufficient proficiency, Kana frequently faced a number of difficulties with anyone in discourse. Thus, she had to remain silent and tried to avoid any interaction with others when she felt insecure. However, in a few cases, she made an effort to build a well-balanced relationship with native speakers. Specifically, in spite of her negative stereotype and others' negative responses, she attempted a few times until she actually drew people into conversation with her deliberate effort. The entry says:

Excerpt 4

Today, we went to the State Fair. At the gate, when an old lady said something to me, I didn't understand all her saying. So I asked her to say it again. She gave her weird look and seemed to say the same thing to me again. But I still didn't understand it. I didn't give it up. Instead, I asked her to repeat one more time. The result was the same.

Even though she did not understand the response afterwards, she still felt more confident with what she had done in that case. Kana continued in her diary:

Excerpt 5

Even though I still did not understand what she was said, I felt really good. I kept asking the same simple question again and again to American, which was not easy for me because sometimes they became bored and irritated to repeat it to me.

This entry reveals that she made some deliberate effort to stay in an ongoing discourse with native speakers even when she was faced with negative feedback. Kana continued, "I am glad what I have done. The more I practice in English, the better I can speak." At least she gained confidence and felt that continuing to try was worthwhile, although painstaking. To sum, as opposed to the previous findings (e.g., Oya et al., 2004), L2 learning anxiety rooted in such interaction sufficiently raised Kana's motivation to stay in the discourse to some extent. Yet, one should note that such positive influence is more likely a by-product. That is, her own encouragement to stay in the interaction came from her regrets in the previous experiences: avoiding negative interaction only reduces her opportunity to learn English in the community.

A Small Amount of Success in Discourse Lowers Anxiety

As seen in the above, as opposed to the fact that negative socio-cultural interaction raised her anxiety in L2, even a small success adequately boosted Kana's self-confidence in language learning. In other words, there is not only negative interaction in Kana's social context but also positive. In fact, she had as much successful discourse with others as negative ones. Among these, two factors for success can be identified in an analysis of her diary. First, when she talked to other international students (i.e., non-native speakers), she felt more comfortable and confident. Even if their language proficiency was extremely higher than Kana's, her anxiety stayed low enough to have a successful conversation. According to the relevant entry, "Today I felt really good in church because I talked in English a lot. Maybe it is because my classmates are almost at my

level." As seen in the entry, interestingly, Kana felt satisfaction with her effort to talk to non-native speakers. Second, when she knew what to talk about in the discourse, she also felt comfortable and regained her self-confidence as seen in Excerpt 6:

Excerpt 6

I realized that if we had topics to talk about, I could talk with less worry. I just can't start off conversation with casual topics. That's why I can talk to my first daughter's teacher at school. She is really nice because she is more patient and listens to me very well. She made me feel very good.

Furthermore, Kana analyzed causes of learning blockage by herself, which she concluded that anxiety was accrued due to having less in common with native speakers. This is what she wrote on the day she met her first daughter's (age five) teacher.

Sense of Security in the Discourse Lowers Anxiety

From the careful analysis of what she wrote, her anxiety is not always related to her language proficiency; how secure Kana feels towards interlocutors also plays a significant role in controlling her anxiety. When her sense of security was higher, she rather enjoyed practicing her English with others as much as she could. Consequently, this kind of successful interaction raised her motivation and interest more and subconsciously lowered her anxiety in such socio-cultural interaction where Kana needed to communicate in English. In short, security in her social relationship with others must be one of the determining factors of successful L2 learning. As seen in Excerpt 7, when she felt more secure with whomever she

interacted with, anxiety started to be incrementally mitigated and, in turn, her motivation to make more attempts increased until the social relationship became meaningful and successful to her. Kana wrote:

Excerpt 7

Today I went to the rowing boat race with my husband's friends. I know their characters a lot, so I could talk to them without any worry. I enjoyed conversation in English. I talked about family, actors and actresses, travels, and so on. I think I have made myself understood very well today. Maybe I was comfortable and felt very secure and relaxed in conversation with them because they are our friends.

As acknowledged in her diary, a sense of security in social interactions accrued based on reduced stereotyping towards the interlocutors because of sufficient social interactions that had previously taken place. This, in turn, successfully lowered her emotional filter so Kana did maintain her motivation to attempt practicing her English without any psychological blockage.

Pedagogical Implication

As discussed above, anxiety in social interactions from various points of view is found to be more complicated to analyze in detail than it seems. Considering the full negative interaction based on the mindset that increases learner's anxiety and blocks successful L2 practice, classroom learning may not be safe enough due to its invisibility among teachers and learners.

With the above in mind, the analysis of the diary and relevant previous studies allow us to draw several teaching implications. First,

teachers should be aware of their own negative mindsets they intrinsically possess (Marx, 2001). Realizing that teachers have their own perception of what they face is a successful step to be able to manage such human nature. Furthermore, if learners understand that it is natural for humans to have mindsets, it can help them integrate into the target community and prepare them for an unpredictable negative interaction with native speakers. However, this understanding does not mean to guide them to engage in such negative interaction; the point here is to avoid such interaction by knowing this negative nature of humans.

Second, to help learners neutralize their negative stereotypes towards target language speakers, learners should be given sufficient information that is generally scarce in the ESL context (de Mas & Ryan, 2001). Simultaneously, helping realize learner's stereotypes can help teachers learn what information the learners really need in order to achieve successful L2 learning.

Lastly, even if it is a small amount, being able to communicate in L2 gives learners a satisfactory feeling, which would lower learning anxiety and maintains motivation to interact in any social context among ESL learners. Therefore, opportunities for learners to discuss familiar topics in an information gap task would help them enjoy practicing English in class. What should be kept in mind in the tasks is that to avoid any unnecessary anxiety, the instructors need to carefully prepare the topics and match the learners according to their proficiency levels.

Conclusion

Shining a light on the psychological influence of ESL learner's

anxiety in and out of the classroom setting, this eight-week case study looked at a non-standard Japanese ESL learner's social interaction with both native and non-native speakers in relation to own stereotyping towards the dominant culture and perception of others' probable mindsets towards her. The findings from her diary adequately support that controlling learner's anxiety would successfully insure the learner's effective learning rooted from her higher self-confidence and sense of security, which is also applicable in any language learning classroom.

However, investigating language learning anxiety in social interaction demands various points of view and the involvement of many other possible factors. What should be noted is that this case study is limited to generalizing the findings due to her limited social interaction; thus, the discussions may be insufficient to describe the whole effect of social interaction over language learning anxiety. Besides, the current study focused on only negative stereotyping to shed light on social interaction as a possible factor of learning anxiety. We should keep in mind that there might be facilitative functions to lower learner's anxiety. In this regard, more empirical research is needed to investigate what role the learner's anxiety is actually serving and whether it is helpful, detrimental, or both. This will help us picture a complete view of the relationship between L2 learning applications in the community and ESL learner's anxiety.

In sum, ESL educators should be more attentive to their own intrinsic mindsets toward learners as well as guide learners to become aware of their stereotyping toward the dominant culture and native speakers. The current findings cannot help emphasizing the necessity of raising awareness of our own negative mindsets, which would lead to mitigate unnecessary learning anxiety among language learners.

This is of critical importance in successful language teaching and learning.

References

- Chen, C. (1999). Common stressors among international college students: research and counseling implications. *Journal of College Counseling*, 2, 49-65.
- Claire, N. (1995). Mainstream classroom teachers and ESL students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 189-196.
- Daley, C., Onwuegbuzie, A., & Bailey, P. (1999). The role of expectations in foreign language learning. In the proceeding of the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association. Point Clear, AL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 436971)
- De Mas, E. & Ryan, P. (2001). Stereotypes of Americans: foreign language learning research. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 452729).
- Dornyei, A. (2003). Attitudes, orientations, and motivations in language learning: advices in theory, research, and applications. *Language learning*, 53, 3-32.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125-132.
- Howell-Richardson, C. & Parkinson, B. (1988). Learner diaries: possibilities and pitfalls. In proceedings of the 20th Annual meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (pp. 74-79). Nottingham, England.

- Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. London, New York: Longman.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: a critical race theory perspective. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 211-247.
- Lara, J. (1984). Demographic overview: changes in student enrollment in American schools. *Kids come in all languages: Reading instruction for ESL students*, 9-21.
- Mackey, A., Polio, C., & McDonough, K. (2004). The relationship between experience, education, and teacher's use of incidental focus-on-form techniques. *Language Teaching Research*, 8, 301-327.
- Marx, S. (2001). How whiteness frames the beliefs of white female pre-service teachers working with English language learners of color. Presented to the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 457119).
- Oya, T, Manalo, E., & Greenwood, J. (2004). The influence of personality and anxiety on the oral performance of Japanese speakers of English. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 18, 841-855.
- Peirce, B. (1994). Language learning, social identity, and immigrant women. In proceedings of the 28th Annual meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1-11. Baltimore, MD.
- Pica, T. (1997). Second language teaching and research relationships: A North American view. *Language Teaching Research*, 1, 48-72.
- Piniel, K. (2006). Foreign language classroom anxiety: A classroom

perspective. In M. Nikolov & J. Horvath (Eds.), *UPRT 2006: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 39-58). Pecs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Suarez-Orozco, C. (2000). Meeting the challenge: schooling immigrant youth. *NABE News*, 24, 6-35.

Abstract

Language Learning Anxiety: Stereotypes Affecting Non-Standard ESL Learners

Hideki Goya

Anxiety is one of the psychological blockages in language learning. To date, a large number of studies have explored the issue with various factors. However, what might affect anxiety still remains less clear, which presses the necessity of further investigation to establish a more secured language learning environment. The current study conducted of an eight-week long case study to explore a second language (L2) learning anxiety using a non-standard ESL learner's diary. The diary was written by a 30 year-old Japanese female taking ESL classes for a non-academic purpose, specifically to acculturate in the community. The study revealed that (1) the negative mindset influenced her interaction with the native speakers and (2) when her sense of security was higher, anxiety decreased and her motivation to seek more interaction increased until the interaction became meaningful. The findings indicate that lowering the learner's anxiety insured effective learning based on the raised self-confidence and sense of security. Overall, not only should language teachers attend to their own mindsets, but also they need to help learners become aware of their own negative mindsets toward the dominant culture and people to build an acquisition-rich environment (Foley, 1991) for both teachers and learners.