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SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS' EFFECT ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENJOYMENT AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY

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by

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Dedication

To all those who have learned a language to communicate with me, friends, authors, and strangers, and to those who have been patient with me, as I communicated in a foreign tongue, teachers, friends, and strangers.

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Abstract

This study yielded data surrounding the relationship between knowing a native speaker and foreign language acquisition, alongside the factors of foreign language enjoyment and foreign language anxiety. Through a survey conducted with 46 language learners from a variety of backgrounds who were contacted through social media, the research questions guiding the study were answered with implications for all language learners both inside and outside the classroom. Through statistical analysis, data proved that knowing a native speaker of the target language is a significant predictor of language learners having a higher perception of proficiency. A higher perception of proficiency is also a significant predictor of lower perceptions of anxiety and nervousness. Results indicate a need for further study of foreign language acquisition and relationships between language learners and native speakers alongside learner emotions.

KEY WORDS: foreign language acquisition, foreign language enjoyment, foreign language classroom anxiety, native speakers

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Introduction

Learning a foreign language is a goal for many and can be a complicated process. There are many factors that play into a language learners' ability to progress in their studies. Learners' emotions affect foreign language acquisition (FLA). Emotions explored in this study are foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). Everyone has levels of enjoyment and anxiety when studying a foreign language which are directly related to outcomes in language proficiency. The researcher conducted a review of the current literature about the topics.

The purpose of this study is to examine FLE, FLCA, and the effects of relationships with native speakers on FLA. This study answered five research questions to better understand the influence of relationships with native speakers on foreign language acquisition and emotions, including: the influence of gender on perception of proficiency in a foreign language, feelings of nervousness and anxiety in relation to perception of foreign language proficiency, and native speaker relationship's influence on perception of proficiency. This study hypothesized that relationships between language learners and native speakers of the target language has effects on language acquisition and these emotions of enjoyment and anxiety.

An online quantitative survey was sent to closed social media groups, then the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques (see Appendix A). The respondents voluntarily answered 14 items about native and target languages, gender, perception of proficiency in their target language, agreement with statements indicating FLE and FLCA, and relationship with a native speaker. All of the research questions were answered using the results of the data analysis.

Literature Review

Introduction

When studying a foreign language, learners' emotions of enjoyment and anxiety influence language proficiency. Levels of motivation and grit among students also play a role in language proficiency. Language learning variables can be affected by the instructor's chosen instructional materials and the students' peer relationships. Experiential learning methods and teachings on cultural differences and similarities also impact language proficiency. Little research has been completed on the ways individual relationships with native speakers of the target language influence these emotions; however, various studies detail the importance of emotion, relationships, and cultural awareness in foreign language acquisition (FLA).

Foreign Language Enjoyment and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

Both internal and external factors play an important role in FLA. Mahmoudi and Mahmoudi (2015) surveyed 136 postgraduate English students in Iran in order to understand connections between internal and external factors affecting learning. Internal factors exist within the student, such as motivation, anxiety, and enjoyment; external factors are outside of the student, such as the teacher, the first language, or the age at which students began their language studies. The questionnaires given to students included 15 items surveying the internal factors, and another 15 items about the external factors (Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015).

Mahmoudi and Mahmoudi (2015) concluded that the factors - internal and external - are not interdependent. Internal factors are not correlated with other internal factors, and external factors are not correlated with other external factors; no internal factors correlated with external factors. Students do not consider the internal or external nature of a factor when determining its importance to language learning (Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015). Mahmoudi and Mahmoudi

(2015) emphasized the necessity of studying both internal and external variables independently. Although some literature surrounding FLA focuses on internal factors, internal factors are not more influential in language acquisition than external factors. Internal factors and external factors are valuable to the language learner and should be evaluated independently, as there is no correlation between the factors (Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015).

Internal factors are often components of a student's personality, such as motivation and attitude (Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015). Two internal factors of FLA are foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). FLE is defined as a positive emotion towards the language learning environment, teacher, peers, and self. High FLE can be seen in classrooms with a positive, light-hearted social environment and in a student's sense of pride and accomplishment. FLCA is defined as a state of anxiety unique to demands from using a foreign language. High FLCA is seen in students who are scared to speak up in class, and in quiet, uncomfortable classrooms (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019).

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019) found that FLE and FLCA are modestly negatively correlated. FLE and FLCA are independent factors that vary inversely depending on student proficiency, classroom environment, and social factors (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). However, Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2019) study found that there are distinct unique predictors of FLE and FLCA. FLE can be predicted based on a student's level of cultural empathy. Cultural empathy refers to a student's ability to relate with the feelings and thoughts of individuals from a different ethnic or geographic background. FLCA can be predicted by a student's emotional stability, which is their ability to regulate strong feelings in stressful situations. Social initiative, a measure of a student's willingness to take the lead in social situations, also proved to be a slight predictor

of both FLE and FLCA, where higher social initiative increased FLE and decreased FLCA. Students' personality traits, such as emotional stability and social initiative, can predict 30% of the variance in FLCA, but only 10% of the variance in FLE, which suggests that instructors and students have greater levels of control over FLE than FLCA. Language learners' social contexts with teachers and peers are relevant to learners' FLE and FLCA (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019).

Shirvan and Taherian (2021) expanded on the idea of FLE and FLCA being separate dimensions through conducting a study of university students in foreign language classes throughout the semester. The researchers concluded that FLE and FLCA are not opposites of each other but separate experiences. While overall FLE increased over the semester and FLCA decreased, their change was not consistent with one another. High FLE and high FLCA can both be present in language learners, for instance, when a student is praised in front of class while worried about taking a quiz. FLE and FLCA are dynamic and change over time as well as day to day (Shirvan & Taherian, 2021).

FLE and FLCA have been proven to impact one another. Yang (2021) completed a quantitative study in which 589 undergraduate students completed a questionnaire and a qualitative study in which 26 of the previous participants were interviewed. The researchers found that foreign language achievement was a significant predictor of FLE and FLCA. Specifically, the higher the achievement of a student, the less likely they were to experience FLCA and more likely to experience FLE. FLE, foreign language achievement, and facilitating anxiety were positively correlated, whereas FLE, foreign language achievement, and debilitating anxiety were negatively correlated. Therefore, not all FLCA has a negative effect on students' language learning outcomes, and some facilitating anxiety may actually boost enjoyment and proficiency (Yang, 2021).

Kang and Wu (2022) wanted to better understand the relationship between academic enjoyment and achievement through several mediating variables. Over 500 Chinese seventh and eighth graders studying English completed a questionnaire. The researchers found that FLE has a predictive effect on FLA. Students who enjoyed studying English were more likely to be proficient in English. Kang and Wu (2022) also determined some mediating factors between FLE and FLA. Self-concept was found to have the highest mediation effect, whereas behavioral engagement and organizational strategy had a lesser significant mediation effect. FLE has direct effects on students' language performance through factors such as self-concept, behavioral engagement, and organizational strategy (Kang & Wu, 2022).

Alsowat (2016) studied 373 English learners in Saudi Arabian universities, researching the proficiency level, gender, and academic backgrounds of the learners in relation to their levels of FLCA. Alsowat (2016) found that Saudi English majors had a moderate level of anxiety in foreign language classrooms. The external factors of gender and learners' academic backgrounds did not have a significant effect on the internal factor of FLCA. In Saudi universities, men and women study in separate classrooms, therefore anxiety stemming from gender differences did not affect FLCA in this setting. Anxiety and language proficiency had a negative correlation with one another, where greater language anxiety lowers language proficiency in grammar, speaking, writing, reading and overall GPA (Alsowat, 2016). Alsowat (2016) recommended that instructors work alongside their students to reduce anxiety as much as possible in order to increase language proficiency among the students.

FLCA can also prove to discourage language learners outside the classroom in future application of the language. Perrodin et al. (2022) studied FLCA in Thai adults who work in international contexts and are required to use English in their work. Thai teachers were often

known to be verbally abusive when their students made mistakes, and the respondents often reported feeling anxious in their foreign language classroom. The respondents continued to report similar feelings of anxiety when using their target language in work contexts, suggesting that the emotions experienced within FLA may have lasting effects on the use of the foreign language (Perrodin et al., 2022).

Instructors' Influence

Foreign language instructors are often the focus of research on FLE and FLCA, as the instructors' actions have direct effects on student emotions (Garcia Sánchez et al., 2013). To determine perceptions of teacher relationships in the language classroom, Garcia Sánchez et al. (2013) interviewed students studying English at a private Mexican university. Garcia Sánchez et al. (2013) concluded that teachers who are empathetic, show interest in their students' development, and are respectful improved students' sense of well-being, attitudes, and willingness to learn. Teachers who created positive student relationships allowed students to be confident in bringing up personal and academic issues with their instructor, improving social skills and knowledge acquisition (Garcia Sánchez et al., 2013).

Effiong (2016) researched a group of students from four different Japanese universities to determine the ways in which different social factors affected the students' FLCA. In regards to the teachers' influence, Effiong (2016) found that when teachers dressed professionally, student anxiety increased; the students were more relaxed when the instructor dressed in casual clothing. Students reported that older teachers, primarily teachers 50 years and older, although some students reported 40 years and older, increased students' levels of anxiety. Japanese culture promotes a high level of respect for elders, which may make it more difficult for the students studied to communicate freely amongst older teachers than in non-Japanese cultural settings. The

ability to relate with the teacher was a contributing factor in students' levels of anxiety (Effiong, 2016).

Ahmadi-Azad et al. (2020) studied the impact of instructor personality on learners' FLE. The study included 107 Iranian English teachers and 1,209 of their students. Of the Big Five personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, three were found to have significant effects on students' FLE. An instructor's openness, extroversion, and agreeableness all had significant positive effects on the students' enjoyment of learning English. Three specific personality traits of teachers have a significant positive effect on students' FLE: openness which allows students some flexibility and motivates students to participate; extroversion creates a positive classroom environment that is engaging for students; and, agreeableness implies warmth and helpfulness towards students (Ahmadi-Azad et al., 2020).

The Influence of Student Personality

Jin and Dewaele (2018) noted that students who sit in the same classroom, with the same teachers and curriculum, can have vastly different outcomes in FLA. Jin and Dewaele (2018) studied 144 Chinese students in foreign language classes to discover the connections between positive orientation, student relationships, and FLCA. Positive orientation is a measure of students' feelings of self-assuredness, optimism, and satisfaction with life. Jin and Dewaele (2018) concluded that the instructors' support was not a strong indicator of students' FLCA. Students' higher positive orientation was a significant negative indicator for FLCA; positive orientation was more influential to FLCA than students' relationships with their teacher or peer relationships (Jin & Dewaele, 2018). Therefore, student personality differences can change the experience of language learning.

Zhang et al. (2020) studied FLE and its relationship to student motivation in Chinese English majors studying their required second foreign language. In order to obtain their English degree, the participants were required to take a foreign language class that is not their native language, Chinese, or English (Zhang et al., 2020). Zhang et al. (2020) found that motivation positively affects proficiency in a second foreign language, with FLE being a mediating factor. The study also examined pedagogy based on positive psychology, through which FLE was taken into account and encouraged by an instructor. Classrooms which employed positive psychological models, where instructors worked to maintain students' motivation and enjoyment in the classroom, reported higher FLE, more highly motivated students, and higher language proficiency. Employing positive psychological models as an external factor in the foreign language classroom improves the internal factor of FLE which raises students' motivation and overall proficiency (Zhang et al., 2020).

Wei et al. (2019) gave 832 Chinese middle school foreign language students questionnaires to see the connections between students' grit, FLE, and performance. The questionnaires measured students' grit and FLE, while the course final exam scores were used to measure students' linguistic performance (Wei et al., 2019). Wei et al. (2019) defined grit as "a self-regulation and non-cognitive personality trait composed of two underlying factors: persistence and long-term consistency of interests" (p. 2). The students who had more grit as determined by the eight-item Grit Scale - Short Version had higher levels of FLE and increased performance. Developing students' positive emotions such as FLE and grit increases proficiency in a foreign language (Wei et al., 2019).

Moskowitz and Dewaele (2020) studied 163 Spanish speakers enrolled in an English class to see if there was any correlation between the intellectual humility of students and FLCA.

Intellectual humility is a measure of students' open-mindedness, intellectual modesty, corrigibility, and engagement. Students showing intellectual humility are willing to consider alternatives, be corrected, and acknowledge the limits of one's understanding. Students were gathered from social media platforms and had a wide range of ages and nationalities. The researchers found that intellectual humility did not play a significant role in the FLE or FLCA of students, however the characteristic of a lack of intellectual overconfidence had a negative effect on FLE and FLCA. Overconfident students are more likely to enjoy FLA and experience less anxiety in the foreign language classroom than their less confident peers (Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2020).

Inada (2021) also studied the importance of student confidence on decreasing FLCA. The research consisted of questionnaires administered to 252 English as a foreign language students at a Japanese university. The most significant predictor of anxiety was found to be self-confidence followed by risk taking, hours of self-study, and motivation. The more self-confident, risk-tolerant, and motivated students are, the lower their levels of anxiety. The longer students are willing to study outside of class, the lower their experiences of anxiety in class (Inada, 2021).

Another personality factor considered in FLE is learners' trait emotional intelligence. Li (2020) studied 1,307 senior high school students from China to discover the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and FLE. There was a significant positive relationship between trait emotional intelligence and FLE, meaning that students who were more emotionally intelligent experienced greater FLE. Therefore, between trait emotional intelligence and foreign language performance, FLE was a mediating factor (Li, 2020).

Social Influence

Socialization is a longitudinal topic of FLA research. In 1987, Kramsch (1987) researched the connection between socialization and literacy development in foreign language students. Written and spoken language are not the same, which makes a narrow focus on grammatical instruction insufficient for teaching spoken language and social competence (Kramsch, 1987). Kramsch (1987) found that socialization increases spoken language proficiency and cultural literacy. Culture must also be considered in literacy instruction, as formality, appropriateness of interruption, and other factors of spoken language differ between languages and cultures. "This integration of socialization into and literacy in a foreign language forms the first step toward the larger integration of language and culture in foreign language education" (Kramsch, 1987, p. 249). Although Kramsch (1987) wrote to foreign language educators of the late 1980s, the importance of socialization and cultural literacy is a topic of value in modern FLA studies because the concepts affecting language acquisition remain unchanged from seminal studies.

Takahashi (1998) spent three years studying Japanese elementary students in English classrooms to determine if Vygotsky's approach of social guidance and motivation proved useful in an foreign language classroom. Takahashi (1998) found Vygotsky's belief that social interaction is imperative to learning and development to be relevant within the foreign language classroom. The researcher concluded that as students progressed in their language development, they were able to more effectively support their peers and work collaboratively. Incorporating collaborative social elements increased overall comprehension in the classroom (Takahashi, 1998).

Goñi-Osácar and Lafuente-Millán (2021) studied 63 students and 4 teachers in Spain regarding students' anxiety while learning English. Approximately 97% of the students reported experiencing some level of FLCA. The study found that the students and teachers both largely linked the FLCA of the students with social factors, such as not wanting to be ashamed or look ridiculous in front of their peers. Activities that caused the most anxiety in the class included oral presentations and oral exams (Goñi-Osácar & Lafuente-Millán, 2021). Socialization is a stressor impacting FLA, FLCA, and FLE.

A sense of classroom community also can predict FLE and FLCA. Alberth (2022) studied 402 high school English language learners to understand the effects of FLE and FLCA on the sense of classroom community. FLE is a positive predictor of the sense of classroom community, and FLCA is a negative predictor of the sense of classroom community. The higher the enjoyment of foreign language among students, the higher the sense of community; and, the higher the anxiety among students, the lower the sense of classroom community. Students' emotions and perceptions of FLA have outcomes on academic peer relationships and classroom experience (Alberth, 2022).

Jin and Dewaele's (2018) study on positive orientation and FLCA also had significant findings on social support in foreign language classrooms. Although not as influential as positive orientation, the study results showed that perceived social support from peers reduced FLCA in students. FLE and FLCA are impacted privately and socially, and increasing social support within classrooms reduces FLCA (Jin & Dewaele, 2018).

While teacher relationships play a significant role in FLCA, Effiong's (2016) study also noted the influence of peer relationships. Students reported being more willing to make mistakes and experience less anxiety in a humorous classroom, where students are willing to laugh at each

other's mistakes. Students in louder, more familiar classrooms reported lower levels of FLCA, while students in quieter classes reported higher levels of FLCA (Effiong, 2016). Peer relationships and social support in classrooms has a valuable effect on FLE and FLCA.

Cultural Awareness

The learners' cultural background impacts FLA. Baykara and Aksu Ataç (2021) studied 140 students at a Turkish international school to determine the difference in FLCA between international students and Turkish students. Seventy of the participants were Turkish, and the remaining 70 were foreign students studying in Turkey. Both groups of students were learning English as a foreign language. The researchers concluded that the foreign students had significantly less FLCA than their Turkish counterparts. In the same classroom with the same teachers, cultural differences and experiences alongside student emotion bear influence on FLA (Baykara & Aksu Ataç, 2021).

Understanding a culture plays an important role in effective communication through a foreign language. Hernandez et al. (2021) studied 90 teachers and 90 students from the University of San Marcos in Peru to determine the enjoyment of cultural knowledge among teachers and students in English language acquisition. The study consisted of questionnaires that aimed to determine attitudes held by both students and teachers toward the impact of teaching English cultural knowledge on FLA (Hernandez et al., 2021). Hernandez et al. (2021) concluded that similarities between cultures and increased exposure to cultural materials creates comprehension and encourages FLA, leading to positive attitudes toward aligning culture and language learning.

Ibatova et al. (2022) studied 75 students from an English Language Institute in Moscow to determine the effectiveness of English cultural materials on speaking fluency and accuracy.

The students were split into two groups, both taking a speaking pre-test and post-test. The experimental group was trained to apply cultural materials to their speaking, while the control group continued studying conventional speaking methods, such as repetition, question and answer, and role playing (Ibatova et al., 2022). The experimental group had significantly higher scores than the control group on the post-test, which led Ibatova et al. (2022) to conclude that cultural materials and cultural awareness have a positive effect on FLA, specifically in students' speaking abilities.

Diep et al. (2022) conducted a study among 50 English learners in Indonesia who were split into experimental and control groups. Each group was given 15 40-minute sessions to improve their language. The experimental group conversed about English traditions and holidays, such as sending and receiving postcards and Boxing Day; whereas, the control group conversed about international phenomena, such as COVID-19 and hobbies. The students were also given a pre- and post-test of speaking abilities, alongside an FLCA questionnaire given following instruction (Diep et al., 2022). Diep et al. (2022) found that cultural-based instruction increased the students' speaking fluency and decreased their levels of FLCA. Teaching students cultural knowledge in their target language increases FLA and decreases FLCA.

Experiential Learning

Lu et al. (2021) interviewed non-native English-speaking tourists traveling to English-speaking locations to study the impact of language learners' socialization during international trips. Participants were asked about their language preparation for their travels, their acquisition while abroad, and their language achievement following the completion of their trip. Enjoyment of the trip was positively connected to the level of language proficiency of the tourist; the tourists enjoyed being able to communicate with native speakers. Linguistic outcomes of the

participants' travels included spoken English improvement, authentic English expression, and a sense of English cultivation. Non-linguistic outcomes were greater self-confidence, English performance satisfaction, increased motivation to learn English, and further travel intention. The trip and interactions with native speakers increased the learners' language proficiency, increased their self-confidence, and heightened their enjoyment of English (Lu et al., 2021).

Moreno-Lopez et al. (2017) studied experiential learning in foreign language classrooms and compared many different classroom models to determine whether or not FLA can be influenced by the classroom environment. The classes studied were a traditional face-to-face classroom, face-to-face classes with community based learning components, face-to-face classes with an online telecollaborative element, and study abroad. All classes had an equal effect on language proficiency, however, classroom engagement was higher in the experiential groups. Students reported that they found experiential learning to be useful in their language acquisition as well as their interest in cultural similarities and differences. Incorporating experiences into the classroom had positive impacts on the students FLE (Moreno-López et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) are significant factors in foreign language acquisition (FLA). A language learners' social standing plays a role in both their FLE and FLCA, and cultural knowledge and experiential learning can improve FLA and FLE while decreasing FLCA. However, the research has limited information on the impact of relationships with native speakers on FLE and FLCA. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze relationships between native speakers and language learners both inside and outside the classroom in order to improve language learners' proficiency, reduce FLCA, and

increase FLE. The hypothesis of this study is that social interaction with native speakers has a

positive effect on FLE and a negative effect on FLCA for foreign language learners.

Methodology

The methodology of this study consisted of a quantitative 14-item survey administered in the English language to participating members of various language learning social media groups followed by data analysis including inferential statistics to determine trends within the reponses. Trends were analyzed to determine overarching conclusions to the research questions.

The data collection instrument was a web-based, researcher-designed and validated survey designed to better understand how relationships with native speakers affect students' FLE and FLCA. The survey was administered to 46 participants who were actively studying a foreign language at the time of the survey.

The survey began with 3 demographic questions, asking respondents their gender, native language, and target language. Participants self-reported their target language proficiency level as novice, intermediate, advanced, superior or distinguished using a chart from ACTFL (see Appendix B). The survey then included six items from the Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety Questionnaire (Dewaele & MacIntyre, n.d.) to determine the FLE and FLCA of respondents. The survey then asked respondents whether or not they knew a native speaker of their target language: if not, the survey ended; but if so, they were presented with three more items about their relationship to the native speaker and what language they used to communicate with the native speaker.

The participants in this study consisted of members of closed groups established as support networks for language learners in one social media platform. Administrators of the group granted permission for the survey to be posted. A simple description of the survey was posted with the link to the tool attached. All participants remained anonymous throughout the study, participation was voluntary, and participants could choose to withdraw their consent and stop

participation without penalty at any time. No compensation was provided for participants.

Participation data was submitted electronically upon completion of each web-based survey. Data

was collected and stored on a password-protected device to which only the researchers had

access. Participants were informed of the privacy practices before giving informed consent to

participate in the study. The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects

approved the study. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics and

is presented in the next section.

Data Analysis

The data analysis section of the thesis study contains the reporting of findings achieved in the thesis study. A non-experimental, quantitative research design was employed to address the study's topic. A survey research approach represented the study's specific research methodology. A total of 46 participants comprised the study's sample. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyze study data at the preliminary, foundational level. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to address each of the five research questions stated in the study. The analysis of data and reporting of study findings were conducted using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v. 28).

Preliminary Findings: Descriptive Statistics

Thesis study data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The study's demographic information was analyzed and reported using frequencies (*n*) and percentages (*%*). Essential response set items represented on the study's research instrument were analyzed using measures of central tendency, variability, standard errors of the mean, and data normality.

Table 1 contains a summary of finding for the descriptive statistical analysis of the study's demographic identifying information of gender, native language, and target language associated with study participants (see Appendix C).

Table 2 contains a summary of finding for the descriptive statistical analysis of the study's demographic identifying information of language proficiency level, relationship with the native speaker, and knowledge level of the native speaker associated with study participants (see Appendix D).

Table 3 contains a summary of finding for the descriptive statistical analysis of the study's survey items associated with perception of enjoyment and "coolness" in learning the target, foreign language by gender of study participant (see Appendix E).

Table 4 contains a summary of finding for the descriptive statistical analysis of the study's survey items associated with perception of enjoyment and "coolness" in learning the target, foreign language by participant relationship to the native speaker of the target language (see Appendix F).

Findings by Research Question

The study's purpose was addressed through the statement of five research questions. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to address the study's research questions. The probability level of $p \leq .05$ was used as the value for findings to be considered statistically significant in the study's findings. Effect sizes achieved in the study's analyses were interpreted using the conventions of effect size interpretation proposed by Sawilowsky (2009).

Research Question #1

To what degree did study participants perceive themselves as proficient in their "Target" Language?

A one sample *t* test was conducted to assess the statistical significance of mean score perceptions of study participants for proficiency level in their target language. As a result, study participants' mean score perceptions of proficiency in their target language of 3.54 (SD = 1.11) was reflected at a statistically significant level ($t_{(45)} = 3.32$; $p = .002$). The main perceptions achieved in research question one equated to a level of proficiency between "advanced" and

"superior" on the study's rating scale of proficiency. The magnitude of effect for study participant perceptions of proficiency in their target language was considered medium at $d = .49$.

Table 5 contains a summary of finding for the evaluation of the statistical significance of study participant mean perceptions of proficiency in their target language (see Appendix G).

Research Question #2

Was there a statistically significant difference in the degree of study participant perceptions of proficiency in the "Target" language by gender of study participant?

A *t* test of Independent Means was used to assess the statistical significance of difference in mean score perceptions of proficiency in their target language by gender of study participant. As a result, the mean score difference favoring the perceptions of male study participants (0.39) was reflected at a non-statistically significant level ($t_{(42)} = 1.04$; $p = .31$). The magnitude of effect in the mean score difference of study participant perceptions of proficiency in their target language by gender of study participant was considered small to medium at $d = .38$.

Table 6 contains a summary of finding for the evaluation of the statistical significance of difference in study participant mean perceptions of proficiency in their target language by gender of study participant (see Appendix H).

Research Question #3

To what degree was study participant perception of "Target" language proficiency predictive of their concern about nervousness they experience when speaking in their "Target" language?

The simple linear regression statistical technique was used to evaluate the predictive ability of study participant perceptions of target language proficiency for subsequent perceptions

of nervousness when speaking in the target language. The predictive model was statistically significant (F (1,43) = 13.57, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .24$), indicating that 23.99% of the variance in perceptions of nervousness when speaking in the target language is explainable by study participant perceptions of target language proficiency. Target language proficiency was statistically significant in predicting perceptions of nervousness when speaking in the target language (B = -0.56, $t_{(43)}$ = -3.68, $p < .001$), indicating that on average, a one-unit increase of study participant perceptions of target language proficiency will decrease the value of nervousness when speaking in the target language by 0.56 units.

Table 7 contains a summary of finding for study participant perceptions of target language proficiency for perceptions of nervousness when speaking in the target language (see Appendix I).

Research Question #4

To what degree was study participant perception of "Target" language proficiency predictive of their anxiety when using their target language?

The simple linear regression statistical technique was used to evaluate the predictive ability of study participant perceptions of target language proficiency for subsequent levels of anxiety when speaking in the target language. The predictive model was statistically significant (F (1,43) = 9.05, $p = .004$, $R^2 = .17$), indicating that 17.38% of the variance in perceptions of anxiety when using their target language is explainable by perceptions of target language proficiency. Perceptions of target language proficiency was statistically significantly predictive of anxiety when speaking in the target language (B = -0.52, $t_{(43)}$ = -3.01, $p = .004$), indicating

that on average, a one-unit increase of perceptions of target language proficiency will decrease the value of perceptions of anxiety when using their target language by 0.52 units.

Table 8 contains a summary of finding for the predictive ability of study participant perceptions of target language proficiency for perceptions of anxiety when speaking in the target language (see Appendix J).

Research Question #5

To what degree was study participant knowledge level of the native language speaker of the target language predictive of perceptions of "Target" language proficiency?

The simple linear regression statistical technique was used to evaluate the predictive ability of study participant knowledge of the native language speaker of the target language for perceptions of target language proficiency. The predictive model was statistically significant (F (1,39) = 9.90, p = .003, R^2 = .20), indicating that 20.24% of the variance in perceptions of target language proficiency is explainable by the knowledge level of the native language speaker of the target language. Knowledge level of the native language speaker of the target language was statistically significant in predicting perceptions of target language proficiency (B = 0.46, $t_{(39)}$ = 3.15, p = .003), indicating that on average, a one-unit increase of knowledge level of the native language speaker of the target language will increase the value of perceptions of target language proficiency by 0.46 units.

Table 9 contains a summary of finding for study participant knowledge of the native language speaker of the target language for perceptions of target language proficiency (see Appendix K).

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the influence of student emotions of FLE and FLCA as well as native speaker relationships on FLA as measured by a survey instrument. The survey included several items related to the native and target languages of the participants, their relationships with native speakers, and their perceptions of proficiency, enjoyment, and anxiety of their target language. The data led to some significant findings about the interaction between several variables analyzed in this study.

The study's survey assessed a diverse group of participants. Around 46% of the participants reported English as their native language, making it the primary native language of the participants in the survey. Some other heavily represented native languages were Spanish (11%), French (4%), and German (4%). The respondents to the survey were primarily female, around 70% reporting. The primary target languages of the participants were French and German, each with around 13% of the sample. Some other major target language groups were Japanese (11%), English (9%), Spanish (9%), Mandarin (7%), and Chinese (7%).

Most of the participants (39%) labeled their target language proficiency as "intermediate" meaning that they "can create with language, ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics, and handle a simple situation or transaction" ("ACTFL Guidelines Pyramid," 2012). Of the participants, 22% reported "advanced" proficiency in the target language (one level higher than "intermediate"), 20% reported "novice" proficiency (the lowest level), 15% reported "superior" proficiency (one level higher than "advanced"), and 4% reported "distinguished" proficiency (the highest level).

Of the participants, only five (11%) reported that they did not know a native speaker of the target language. Most participants described the native speaker as a friend (22%), an

acquaintance (20%) or an immediate family member (17%). Of the participants, 13% labeled the native speaker as a close friend, and 4% as an extended family member. The participants were closely divided on their knowledge of the native speaker, with 20% reporting that they had minimal knowledge, 24% reporting being somewhat knowledgeable, 26% reporting being knowledgeable, and 20% reporting being extremely knowledgeable.

Participants exemplified their FLE by rating their enjoyment of learning a foreign language, and the "coolness" of knowing a foreign language on a five-point Likert scale. Average FLE was similar between male and female participants. The FLE of participants also remained consistent across relationship types with the native speaker.

The first research question of this study was, "To what degree did study participants perceive themselves as proficient in their target language?" The participants rated their abilities in the target language using a scale created by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (see Appendix B). The ACTFL rating scale described proficiency through five levels. The lowest proficiency level is "novice," in which the language learner "can communicate with rote utterances, lists, and phrases" ("ACTFL Guidelines Pyramid," 2012). The next proficiency level is "intermediate", in which the language learner "can create with language, ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics, and handle a simple situation or transaction" ("ACTFL Guidelines Pyramid," 2012). The next proficiency level is "advanced", in which the language learner "can narrate and describe in all major time frames and handle a situation with a complication" ("ACTFL Guidelines Pyramid," 2012). The next proficiency level is "superior", in which the language learner "can support opinion, hypothesize, discuss topics concretely and abstractly, and handle a linguistically unfamiliar situation" ("ACTFL Guidelines Pyramid," 2012). The highest proficiency level is "distinguished", in which language learners

"can reflect on a wide range of global issues and highly abstract concepts, use persuasive hypothetical discourse, and tailor language to a variety of audiences" ("ACTFL Guidelines Pyramid," 2012). The average participant perception of proficiency was somewhere between the "advanced" and "superior" categories.

The second research question of this study was, "Was there a statistically significant difference in the degree of study participant perceptions of proficiency in the target language by gender of the study participant?" The difference in average score of perception of proficiency between the male and female participants was not statistically significant.

The third research question was, "To what degree was study participant perception of target language proficiency predictive of their concern about nervousness they experience when speaking in their target language?" Target language proficiency was statistically significant in predicting perceptions of nervousness when speaking in the target language. On average, if a participant rated themselves one level higher on the proficiency scale, they were likely to rate themselves half a level lower on feelings of nervousness when speaking in the target language.

The fourth question is similar to the third, "To what degree was study participant perception of target language proficiency predictive of their anxiety when using their target language?" The participants' perception of their target language was statistically significant in predicting levels of anxiety when using the target language. On average, if a participant rated themselves one level higher on the proficiency scale, they were likely to rate themselves half a level lower on feelings of anxiety when using their target language.

The final research question asked, "To what degree was study participant knowledge level of the native speaker of the target language predictive of perceptions of target language proficiency?" Knowledge of a native speaker is statistically significant in predicting the

perception of proficiency of the participant. The higher the participant rated their knowledge of the native speaker, the more likely they were to rate their proficiency higher. A one-level increase in knowledge of the native speaker yielded almost a half-level increase in proficiency perceptions.

Overall, a higher perception of proficiency is indicative of lower feelings of anxiety and nervousness, and having a higher knowledge of a native speaker. Table 10 (see Appendix L) shows the predictive tendencies of perception of proficiency combining the results of research questions 3, 4, and 5.

The findings of this study are corroborative with other similar studies conducted in classroom environments. The negative correlation between FLCA and language proficiency is exemplified by the data collected and analyzed for the third and fourth research questions of this study and is corroborative to findings from Alsowat (2016). The final research question led to a novel discovery of the positive predictability between native speaker knowledge and proficiency perceptions.

Conclusion

Language learners' feelings significantly impact FLA and should continue to be studied inside and outside of the foreign language classroom. This study was able to add to the body of research surrounding foreign language learning by surveying foreign language learners outside a classroom environment. The participants of this study were diverse, therefore the findings are indicative of, and can be generalized across, a wide variety of language learners. The study was also able to present statistically significant findings intuitive to the nature of language learning. The research directs foreign language learners and instructors to invest in relationships with native speakers of the target language alongside traditional language learning.

One weakness of this study is that proficiency was self-reported, not tested. The findings of this study can only be applied to the perception a language learner has about themselves, rather than actual ability in the target language. Another weakness of the study is the lack of findings related to FLE. There was also a small number of respondents who did not know a native speaker of the target language, so no conclusions were able to be drawn about differences between language learners who know a native speaker compared to those who do not.

An area of future research that could improve upon the study's weaknesses could include reintroducing this study in a classroom setting. Half of students could be paired with a native-speaking tutor of the target language, while the other half are paired with a high-level non-native-speaking tutor to enrich language instruction and practice specific linguistic skills. Researchers could use pre- and post-tests to measure FLE, FLCA, and proficiency after a predetermined period of tutoring which would create a more controlled environment to measure proficiency. Results could, then, be directly compared between students interacting with native and non-native speakers. Language learners' emotions, specifically feelings of nervousness and

anxiety, impact student outcomes in FLA. Knowing a native speaker of the target language improves perceptions of proficiency in a foreign language.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. What is your gender?

    a. Male

    b. Female

    c. Non-binary / third gender

    d. Prefer not to say

2. What is your native language? (short answer)

Your target language is the foreign language you are currently learning. If you are studying multiple foreign languages, please choose one and answer all the following questions with respect to that language.

3. What is your target language? (short answer)

4. Please use the image below to describe your current level of proficiency in your target language. (See Appendix B for accompanying visual)

    a. Distinguished

    b. Superior

    c. Advanced

    d. Intermediate

    e. Novice

For questions 5-10, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

5. I enjoy my target language.

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Somewhat disagree

  c. Uncertain

  d. Somewhat agree

  e. Strongly agree

6. It's "cool" to know a foreign language.

  a. Strongly disagree

  b. Somewhat disagree

  c. Uncertain

  d. Somewhat agree

  e. Strongly agree

7. I don't get bored of my target language.

  a. Strongly disagree

  b. Somewhat disagree

  c. Uncertain

  d. Somewhat agree

  e. Strongly agree

8. I get nervous when asked to use my target language.

  a. Strongly disagree

  b. Somewhat disagree

  c. Uncertain

  d. Somewhat agree

  e. Strongly agree

9. Even when I have prepared for a situation that requires me to use my target language, I

  feel anxious about it.

a. Strongly disagree

b. Somewhat disagree

c. Uncertain

d. Somewhat agree

e. Strongly agree

10. I worry about making mistakes in my target language.

a. Strongly disagree

b. Somewhat disagree

c. Uncertain

d. Somewhat agree

e. Strongly agree

11. I know someone who is a native speaker of my target language.*

a. Yes

b. No

If you know multiple people who are native speakers of your target language, please answer the

following questions in regards to the native speaker you are closest to.

12. Which of the following most accurately describes your relationship with the native

speaker?

a. Acquaintance

b. Friend

c. Close Friend

d. Immediate Family Member (your spouse, parent, or child)

e. Extended Family Member (your grandparent, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece)

f. Other:

13. When communicating with the native speaker, what language do you primarily use?

    a. My native language

    b. My target language

    c. A common third language (i.e.: a native German speaker and a native French

       speaker communicate in English)

14. On a scale of one to five, how well do you know the native speaker?

    a. One - I hardly know their name.

    b. Two

    c. Three

    d. Four

    e. Five - I know everything about them.

*If a respondent answered no to question 11, their survey would end at that point, but if a

respondent answered yes, they were asked to answer questions 12-14.

Appendix B

ACTFL Guidelines Pyramid
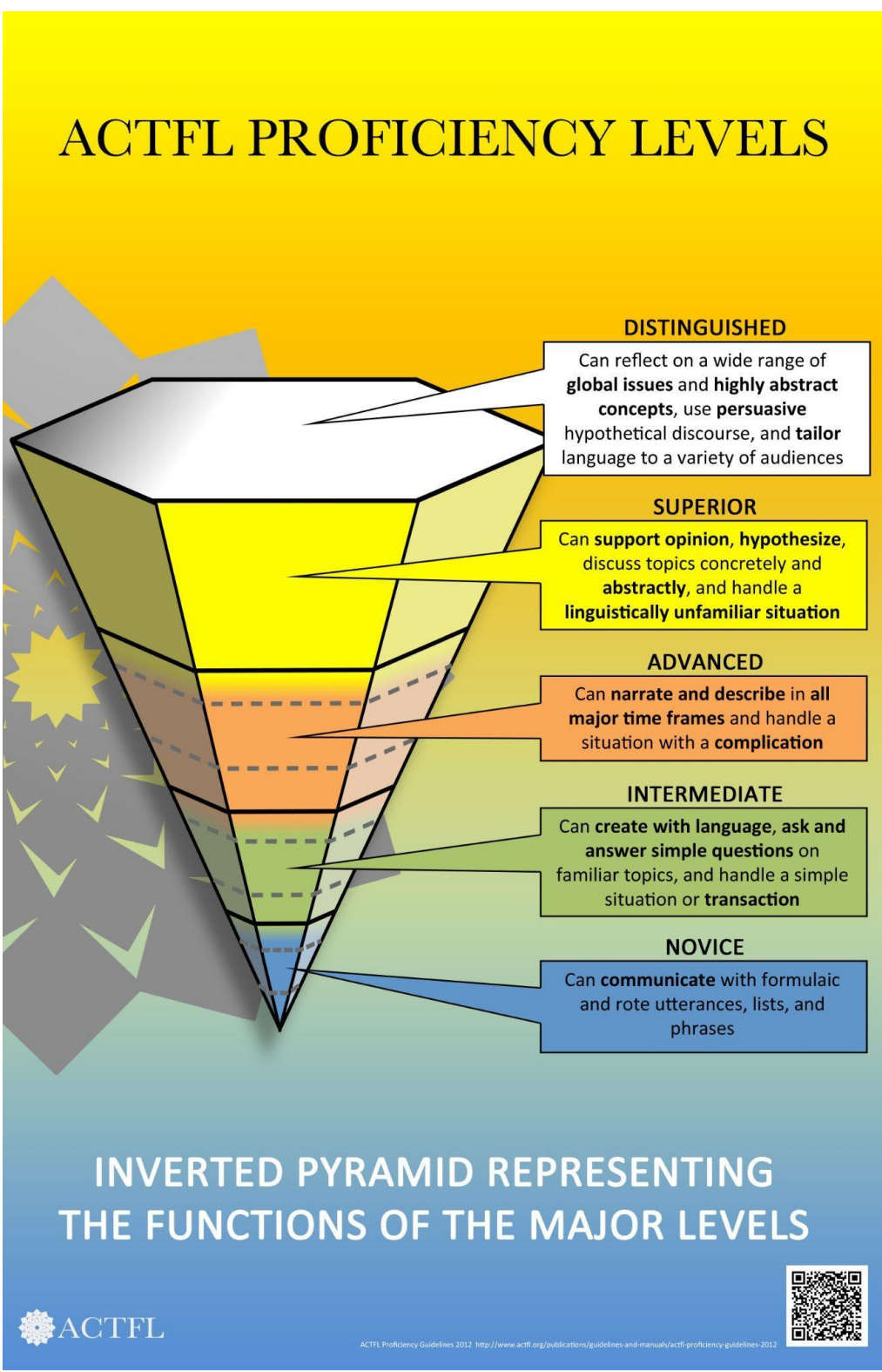
Appendix C

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics Summary Table: Gender, Native Language, & Target Language

Variable	*n*	*%*	Cumulative *%*
Gender			
Male	12	26.09	26.09
Female	32	69.57	95.65
Non-binary / third gender	2	4.35	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Native Language			
English	21	45.65	45.65
Spanish	5	10.87	56.52
Greek	1	2.17	58.70
Persian, Arabic, English, Tabari.	1	2.17	60.87
Persian	1	2.17	63.04
Englisj	1	2.17	65.22
Filipino, English, Cebuano	1	2.17	67.39
French	2	4.35	71.74
Dutch	1	2.17	73.91
Polish	1	2.17	76.09
German	2	4.35	80.43
Italian	1	2.17	82.61
Spanish	1	2.17	84.78
Español Rioplatense	1	2.17	86.96

Swedish	1	2.17	89.13
Bulgarian	1	2.17	91.30
Icelandic	1	2.17	93.48
Nepali	1	2.17	95.65
Spanish/English	1	2.17	97.83
Danish	1	2.17	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Target Language			
Mandarin	3	6.52	6.52
English	4	8.70	15.22
Spanish	4	8.70	23.91
Japanese	5	10.87	34.78
French	6	13.04	47.83
Hindi/Urdu	1	2.17	50.00
German, Japanese, Russian, French	1	2.17	52.17
Swiss German	1	2.17	54.35
German	6	13.04	67.39
Chinese	3	6.52	73.91
Hungarian	1	2.17	76.09
Danish	1	2.17	78.26
Hebrew	1	2.17	80.43
Dutch	1	2.17	82.61
Italian	1	2.17	84.78
Arabic	1	2.17	86.96

Pashto	1	2.17	89.13
Norwegian	1	2.17	91.30
Hindi	1	2.17	93.48
Korean	2	4.35	97.83
Russian	1	2.17	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00

Appendix D

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics Summary Table: Language Proficiency Level, Relationship to Native Speaker, and Knowledge of the Native Speaker

Variable	*n*	*%*	Cumulative %
Language Proficiency Level			
Distinguished	2	4.35	4.35
Superior	7	15.22	19.57
Advanced	10	21.74	41.30
Intermediate	18	39.13	80.43
Novice	9	19.57	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Relation to Native Speaker			
Acquaintance	9	19.57	19.57
Friend	10	21.74	41.30
Close Friend	6	13.04	54.35
Immediate Family Member	8	17.39	71.74
Extended Family Member	2	4.35	76.09
Other:	6	13.04	89.13
Missing	5	10.87	100.00
Knowledge Level of Native Speaker			
Minimal Knowledge	9	19.57	19.57
Somewhat Knowledgeable	11	23.91	43.48
Knowledgeable	12	26.09	69.57

Extremely Knowledgeable	9	19.57	89.13
Missing	5	10.87	100.00

Appendix E

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics Summary Table: Perceptions of Enjoyment in Learning the Target
Language and "Coolness" of Learning a Foreign Language by Gender*

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*n*	SE_M	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Male								
Enjoyment	4.00	1.13	12	0.33	1.00	5.00	-1.59	2.27
Coolness	4.92	0.29	12	0.08	4.00	5.00	-3.02	7.09
Female								
Enjoyment	4.65	0.61	31	0.11	3.00	5.00	-1.48	1.08
Coolness	4.94	0.25	31	0.04	4.00	5.00	-3.55	10.57

Appendix F

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics Summary Table: Perceptions of Enjoyment in Learning the Target Language and "Coolness" of Learning a Foreign Language by Participant Relationship to the Native Speaker of the Target Language

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*SE_M*	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Acquaintance								
Enjoyment	4.67	0.50	9	0.17	4.00	5.00	-0.71	-1.50
Coolness	5.00	0.00	9	0.00	5.00	5.00	-	-
Friend								
Enjoyment	4.40	1.26	10	0.40	1.00	5.00	-2.19	3.49
Coolness	5.00	0.00	10	0.00	5.00	5.00	-	-
Close Friend								
Enjoyment	4.67	0.52	6	0.21	4.00	5.00	-0.71	-1.50
Coolness	4.67	0.52	6	0.21	4.00	5.00	-0.71	-1.50
Immediate Family Member								
Enjoyment	4.25	0.89	8	0.31	3.00	5.00	-0.49	-1.37
Coolness	5.00	0.00	8	0.00	5.00	5.00	-	-
Extended Family Member								
Enjoyment	3.50	0.71	2	0.50	3.00	4.00	0.00	-2.00
Coolness	5.00	0.00	2	0.00	5.00	5.00	-	-
Other:								
Enjoyment	4.67	0.52	6	0.21	4.00	5.00	-0.71	-1.50
Coolness	4.83	0.41	6	0.17	4.00	5.00	-1.79	1.20

Appendix G

Table 5

Summary Table: Study Participant Perceptions of Proficiency in their Target Language

Variable	*M*	*SD*	μ	*t*	*p*	*d*
Proficiency	3.54	1.11	3	3.32	.002**	0.49

Note. Degrees of Freedom for the *t*-statistic = 45. *d* represents Cohen's *d.* $p < .01$

Appendix H

Table 6

Summary Table: Comparison of Perceptions of Proficiency in Target Language by Gender of Study Participant

Variable	Male		Female		t	p	d
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Proficiency	3.83	0.83	3.44	1.22	1.04	.31	0.38

Note. N = 44. Degrees of Freedom for the *t*-statistic = 42. *d* represents Cohen's *d*.

Appendix I

Table 7

Model Summary Table: Predicting Perceptions of Nervousness in Using Target Language by Perceptions of Proficiency with the Target Language

Model	B	SE	95.00% CI	β	t	p
(Intercept)	1.57	0.56	[0.45, 2.70]	0.00	2.82	.007
Target Language Proficiency	-0.56	0.15	[-0.86, -0.25]	-0.49	-3.68	< .001

Appendix J

Table 8

Results for Linear Regression with Proficiency Predicting Perceptions of Anxiety when Speaking in the Target Language

Model	*B*	*SE*	95.00% CI	β	*t*	*p*
(Intercept)	1.66	0.64	[0.37, 2.94]	0.00	2.60	.01
Proficiency	-0.52	0.17	[-0.87, - 0.17]	-0.42	-3.01	.004**

**p < .01

Appendix K

Table 9

Model Summary Table: Relationship Level with the Native Speaker of the Target Language
Predicting Proficiency

Model	*B*	*SE*	95.00% CI	β	*t*	*p*
(Intercept)	4.59	0.40	[3.79, 5.40]	0.00	11.54	< .001
Relationship Level	0.46	0.15	[0.75, 0.16]	0.45	3.15	.003**

**p < .01

Appendix L

Table 10