

## ***The Stability of General Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety across Languages among Chinese Undergraduate Foreign Language Learners***

**Guo Yan**

*Huazhong University of Science and Technology, P. R. China*

The present study examined the stability of the general foreign language (hereinafter, FL) classroom anxiety construct across English, French, Japanese and Russian among Chinese undergraduate foreign language learners. Language majors learning simultaneously two foreign languages from three universities in central China participated in the study. They were categorized into three groups, one group learning English and French simultaneously, the other English and Japanese, and the third English and Russian. They reported the levels of general FL anxiety felt in each foreign language classroom by completing a questionnaire that included two Chinese versions of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS, Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986), one for each language. Separate paired samples *t* tests were conducted within each group and one-way ANOVAs were performed between groups in order to measure the stability of the general FL anxiety construct across the four languages listed above. It was found that a statistically significant difference of overall anxiety levels existed across English and Japanese with the learning of Japanese provoking significantly lower levels of anxiety than English when both languages are simultaneously learned. The comparison between groups revealed that the group learning English and Japanese simultaneously perceived a significantly higher level of anxiety in English, the same first FL that all the three groups share, but a significantly lower level of anxiety in

Japanese, the second FL, than the groups learning French and Russian as the second FL respectively. All the findings suggested that the levels of general FL anxiety may not be independent of the native language-foreign language pairing and may vary across languages according to the specific target language under learning.

**Key words: language anxiety, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), stability across languages, Chinese undergraduate foreign language learners, native language-foreign language pairing**

## INTRODUCTION

With the focus of foreign language (hereinafter, FL) teaching and learning researches being shifted from the teachers, teaching materials and other outside determinants to the learners themselves, foreign language anxiety, one vital variant of the affective factors, has become one of the central concerns of FL acquisition research. Foreign language anxiety refers to “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 128). In light of this conceptualization, a subsequent model of the general FL anxiety construct was established, and a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was formulated to measure the construct. A multitude of FL anxiety research using the FLCAS has yielded consistent findings. However, most of the studies only examined FL anxiety in the learning of one language, leaving the stability of the FL anxiety construct across languages under-explored (Rodriguez & Abreu, 2003). In addition, although a few published studies addressed the stability issue, for instance, Rodriguez and Abreu (2003) and Saito, Horwitz, and Garza (1999), both studies have been conducted among Western-language native speakers, leaving studies in the context of non-Western native language a blank. Horwitz (2001) contended that general FL anxiety might vary in different cultural groups, suggesting a vast potential for studying FL anxiety in non-Western cultural groups. However, to date,

studies on FL anxiety in non-Western cultures haven't received its due attention. The present paper attempts to investigate the stability of the FL anxiety construct across languages among Chinese undergraduate foreign language learners.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The last two decades has witnessed an upsurge of interest in FL anxiety research which mainly concentrated on exploring the relationship between FL anxiety and FL performance and on probing into the determinants of FL anxiety. Significant negative correlation between FL anxiety and FL performance has been consistently found in many research studies (e.g., Aida, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991, 1994; Onwnegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley 1999). However, it is yet to be proved whether FL anxiety causes poor language performance. Horwitz (2001) insisted that FL anxiety was the cause of poor language learning while Sparks and Ganschow (1991, 1995, 2001) proposed that subtle first language learning deficits might be the primary cause of poor achievement. As to how general FL anxiety is caused, Young (1991) classified 6 major categories of sources and Price (1991) revealed speaking in FL classes as one that contributed most to the provocation of anxiety. Chen (2002) also claimed that oral-oriented activities were the most FL anxiety-provoking situations in EFL classroom contexts. Cognitive interference produced by self-related cognitions, which include self-esteem, self-perception and self-confidence, may also be possible contributors (Aida, 1994; Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999; MacIntyre, Noels & Clement, 1997; Young, 1991).

Aside from the two focal aspects of studies on FL anxiety, specific FL anxieties associated with language skills other than general FL anxiety has also attracted much attention. This arises from the concern that the use of FLCAS, a scale with 20 items out of 33 focusing on listening to and speaking a FL, would not be able to identify those anxiety-provoking aspects of

language learning other than speaking. Cheng et al. (1999) explored the construct of FL writing anxiety and its conceptual link with general FL anxiety. Later in 2004, Cheng further studied it and developed the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) to quantitatively measure the construct of writing anxiety which she claimed to consist of somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety and avoidance behavior. Likewise, Saito et al. (1999) specifically studied whether FL reading anxiety was a construct distinct from the general FL anxiety by means of the FLCAS and the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS). They found that reading-related anxiety did exist and the levels of reading anxiety varied by target language and were related to the specific writing systems.

Still another interesting concern is the investigation of the stability of the general FL anxiety construct across languages. Researchers tend to wonder whether FL anxiety varies according to a specific target language or is independent of the native language-foreign language pairing. Saito et al. (1999), in their study of FL reading anxiety, measured the general FL anxiety level of three groups of American students studying French, Japanese, and Russian respectively. The comparison of the FLCAS scores reported by the three groups of learners yielded a statistically non-significant difference across the three languages, indicating that the levels of general FL anxiety did not depend on the specific target language. Rodriguez and Abreu (2003) criticized Saito et al.'s study as providing only indirect evidence for the conclusion since each group of students were studying a different foreign language and suggested that direct evidence would be provided by comparing the levels of general FL anxiety among students learning simultaneously two or more foreign languages. So, they, in turn, used Spanish pre-service teachers who were learning simultaneously two foreign languages (English and French) as the subjects to investigate the extent to which the levels of general FL anxiety differed. Their results again yielded statistically non-significant differences, indicating that general FL anxiety was universally felt by language learners and the levels of it did not depend on the specific target language. However, in Rodriguez and Abreu's study, the languages involved

(i.e. Spanish, French and English) are cognates and all use a Roman alphabet, which may be one factor that contributed to the finding of no significant anxiety differences across languages. In addition, the samples in their study are pre-service language teachers, which makes the results not plausible to generalize to the general students' population.

What is worth noting is that by far FL anxiety research has traditionally focused on foreign language settings in the United States and Canada with cognate Western languages and only a few studies have been conducted among non-Western-language native speakers (e.g., Cheng, 2002, 2004; Cheng et al., 1999; Yan & Horwitz, 2008). Horwitz (2001) contended that general FL anxiety might vary in different cultural groups. Elkhafaifi (2005) also claimed that although FL anxiety may be engendered by various aspects of FL learning, it was more likely that the unfamiliar writing and phonological systems as well as the foreign cultural context of languages like Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic might produce greater anxiety in learning them. Likewise, learners with these languages as their native language may also experience greater anxiety when learning a foreign language like English, French, or Spanish, which differ from their native language on a large scale. Therefore, more studies on learners from oriental or non-Western cultural backgrounds are needed to extend the scope of research. Regarding the stability issue of FL anxiety, in the context of China, one group of learners, i.e. language majors, learn simultaneously two foreign languages. Studies on these students, in particular on the general FL anxiety they report in both languages, may well reveal whether FL anxiety is a construct universal for all languages and independent of the native language-foreign language pairing, providing more insight into FL anxiety research in non-Western settings.

Thus the present study attempts to examine the stability of general FL anxiety across languages among Chinese undergraduates learning two foreign languages simultaneously. Three groups of language majors, one group learning both French and English, the other Japanese and English and the third Russian and English, participated in the study. For these Chinese undergraduates, English and French have many cognates and both use the

Roman alphabet, Russian is a semi-cognate language to English utilizing the phonological Cyrillic alphabet (Saito et al., 1999), and Japanese has many cognates with Chinese, their native language, and uses several alphabets ranging from roughly phonological to logographic. The following research questions were explored in the study:

1. Do the levels of general FL anxiety vary across the pairing of French and English, Japanese and English, and Russian and English among Chinese undergraduate learners of these languages?
2. Do the levels of general FL anxiety vary across French, Japanese, and Russian, namely the second foreign language learned by each of the three groups of students?
3. Do the levels of general FL anxiety perceived when learning the same first foreign language, English, vary among the three groups of Chinese undergraduate students?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The participants in the present study were 225 language majors from 3 universities in central China who were simultaneously learning two foreign languages, among which one was English, a foreign language required for all college undergraduates and the other, the major chosen of their own choice upon entering college. All the participants had learned English for 6 to 7 years in middle school while their major, French, Japanese and Russian were only studied for 1 year at college. In terms of the sequence of the FLs learned, English was their first FL which can be labeled FL1 and the respective French, Japanese and Russian were their second FL which can be labeled FL2. Based on the varying FL2, the participants were categorized into three groups. The first group of students studied French and English simultaneously,

the second Japanese and English, and the third Russian and English. 207 of the participants completed their questionnaires validly, resulting in a response rate of 92.0%. Among them, 145 were female (70.0%) and 62 were male (30.0%). 70 were from the first group, 68 the second group, and 69 the third group. Their ages ranged from 20 to 23 years old.

### **Instruments**

Three Chinese versions of the FLCAS (one for each group) were used in the present study. In order to control for order effect, each version of the FLCAS was a combination of measurement of two foreign languages, with the items assessing the FLCA in classes of English (henceforth FL1) mixed with those measuring the FLCA in the respective French, Japanese and Russian classes (henceforth FL2). Therefore, there arose one scale for both French and English, one for Japanese and English and a third for Russian and English. For each scale, the term “foreign language” used in the original FLCAS was replaced with French, Japanese, Russian, or English. The adapted FLCAS consisted of 33 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Students were instructed to indicate their level of general FL classroom anxiety by choosing the number 1 to 5 that corresponded with statements ranging from “I never do/feel like this” (1 point) to “I always do/feel like this” (5 points). Thus, the theoretical range of the FLCAS for each language was from 33 to 165. Aside from the FLCA scale, some background information such as gender, proficiency level of the foreign languages, and years spent in studying each foreign language was included in the overall questionnaire as the first part. The subjects’ proficiency level of the foreign languages was indicated not by examination scores but by three options of overall assessment: FL1 proficiency equals FL2 proficiency, FL1 proficiency is higher than FL2 proficiency, or FL1 proficiency is lower than FL2 proficiency.

All the three versions of the FLCAS questionnaire were administered to the three groups of students during regular class time and it took about 15

minutes to complete. In order to minimize the possibility of response bias (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995), prior to the distribution of the questionnaires, the students were assured that there was no right or wrong answer, that their responses would not affect their assessment in the English course, and that all the data would be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes.

## **RESULTS**

To check the internal consistency of the three versions of the FLCAS, a reliability analysis was first performed. With the whole sample, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.920 for the FL2 scale and 0.912 for the FL1 scale. Regarding the specific foreign languages, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.921 for French, 0.938 for Japanese, 0.855 for Russian, and respectively 0.790, 0.951 and 0.847 for the English scale used in each group. The internal consistency coefficients for both the whole sample and each specific foreign language are high enough to assure the reliability of the scales.

### **Research Question 1**

In order to investigate whether the levels of general FL anxiety varied across each pair of foreign languages (French and English for Group 1; Japanese and English for Group 2; Russian and English for Group 3), overall comparisons were computed using separate paired samples *t* tests. For each comparison, the alpha level was set up at <0.05. A statistically significant difference of overall anxiety levels was only found across the pairing of Japanese and English ( $t_{(68)}=4.935$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). When learning Japanese and English simultaneously, the learners perceived significantly higher levels of anxiety in the English classroom. For the other two groups, the overall general anxiety experienced in learning English did not differ statistically

from that reported when learning French ( $t_{(70)}=0.277$ ,  $p=0.783$ ) or Russian ( $t_{(69)}=-1.089$ ,  $p=0.280$ ). Means, standard deviations, and sample ns are shown in Table 1. The results of the separate paired samples  $t$  tests are presented in Table 2.

**TABLE 1**  
**Means & Standard Deviations**

Group	<i>n</i>	FL1 anxiety			FL2 anxiety		
		FL1	Mean	SD	FL2	Mean	SD
Group 1	70	English	90.29	11.65	French	89.71	17.87
Group 2	68	English	100.62	25.34	Japanese	81.66	21.25
Group 3	69	English	91.32	13.82	Russian	93.65	14.03

**TABLE 2**  
**Results of Separate Paired Samples  $t$  Tests**

Group	<i>n</i>	FL1	FL2	Separate paired samples $t$ test between anxiety levels perceived in FL1 and FL2	
				$t$ value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Group 1	70	English	French	0.277	0.783
Group 2	68	English	Japanese	4.935*	0.000
Group 3	69	English	Russian	-1.089	0.280

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Since the subjects had learned the two foreign languages for different lengths of time and had obtained varying levels of proficiency, whether the levels of general FL anxiety would vary across the first and second foreign languages among the students categorized in terms of the balance of the proficiency levels (without differentiating the specific second foreign languages) called for some examination. As illustrated in Table 3 and 4, the students with equal proficiency of FL1 and FL2 exhibited similar levels of general anxiety in FL1 and FL2 while the students with a higher level of proficiency in FL2 reported significantly lower levels of anxiety in FL2 than in FL1 and likewise the FL1-more-proficient students displayed significantly lower levels of anxiety in FL1 than in FL2.

**TABLE 3**  
**Anxiety Levels in Terms of Proficiency Groups**

Proficiency	FL1 Anxiety			FL2 Anxiety		
	Mean	SD	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	<i>n</i>
FL1-FL2 equal	88.77	13.76	65	86.37	16.93	65
FL1 higher	87.18	17.77	44	95.32	18.33	44
FL2 higher	100.58	19.28	98	86.60	19.08	98

**TABLE 4**  
**Results of Separate Paired Samples *t* Tests in Terms of Proficiency Groups**

Proficiency	<i>n</i>	FL1	FL2	Separate paired samples <i>t</i> test between anxiety levels perceived in FL1 and FL2	
				<i>t</i> value	Sig. (2-tailed)
FL1-FL2 equal	65	English	French/Japanese/ Russian	0.924	0.359
FL1 higher	44	English	French/Japanese/ Russian	-2.712*	0.010
FL2 higher	98	English	French/Japanese/ Russian	5.280*	0.001

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

## Research Question 2

In order to investigate whether the levels of general anxiety in different second foreign language classrooms (i.e., FL2 classrooms) varied among the three groups of students, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare them. The analysis yielded statistically significant differences between the anxiety levels reported by the Japanese-as-FL2 group when learning Japanese and those perceived by the other two groups when learning French and Russian. The Japanese-as-FL2 group scored significantly lower in the general FL2 anxiety, indicating that learning Japanese is less anxiety-provoking than the learning of French and Russian for the Chinese college learners. No statistically significant difference was found between the anxiety levels felt by the French-as-FL2 group when learning French and by the Russian-as-FL2 group when learning Russian. The result of the one-way ANOVA

appears in Table 5.

**TABLE 5**  
**One-way ANOVA Results of FL2 Anxiety among Groups**

Dependent Variable	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
FL2 anxiety	French-as-FL2 group	Japanese-as- FL2 group	8.05252*	0.033
	French-as- FL2 group	Russian-as- FL2 group	-3.93789	0.435
	Japanese-as- FL2 group	Russian-as- FL2 group	-11.99041*	0.001

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

### Research Question 3

In order to find out whether there was any significant difference between the general FL anxiety levels perceived when learning the same first foreign language, English, among the three groups of students, another one-way ANOVA was conducted. Although the three groups of students learned the same first foreign language, the Japanese-as-FL2 group reported significantly greater degree of general anxiety in English learning than the other two groups. No significant difference of anxiety levels in the learning of English was detected between the French-as-FL2 group and the Russian-as-FL2 group. The result of the one-way ANOVA is shown in Table 6.

**TABLE 6**  
**One-way ANOVA Results of FL1 Anxiety among Groups**

Dependent Variable	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
FL1 anxiety (English)	French-as- FL2 group	Japanese-as- FL2 group	-10.33193*	0.004
	French-as- FL2 group	Russian-as- FL2 group	-1.03313	0.944
	Japanese-as- FL2 group	Russian-as- FL2 group	9.29881*	0.011

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

## **DISCUSSION**

The present study examined the extent to which the levels of general FL anxiety varied across foreign languages. The fact that all the three groups of students experienced certain levels of FL anxiety in both first and second foreign language learning reinforced the belief that anxiety is a widespread and important factor in foreign/second language acquisition, no matter which foreign/second language it is and how distant and different or how close and similar the native and foreign language are. More importantly, direct evidence by means of the comparison of the FL anxiety felt by the same subjects when learning simultaneously two foreign languages (Rodriguez & Abreu, 2003) showed that significant difference existed between the levels of FL anxiety perceived when learning English and Japanese among the Japanese-as-FL2 students but not between English and French among the French-as-FL2 students or English and Russian among the Russian-as-FL2 students. The learning of Japanese provoked significantly lower levels of general FL anxiety than English when both languages are studied simultaneously. In the meantime, indirect evidence, i.e. the comparison of general anxiety felt when learning different second foreign languages, yielded also statistically significant differences between the anxiety levels reported by the Japanese-as-FL2 group when learning Japanese and the other two groups when learning French and Russian respectively. The Japanese-as-FL2 group reported the lowest level of anxiety in the learning of the second FL, Japanese, while at the same time demonstrating the highest level of anxiety in the learning of English, the first foreign language, among the three groups. Thus, both direct and indirect evidence indicated that general FL anxiety may not be independent of the native language-foreign language pairing and may vary across languages according to the specific target language under learning.

Such a finding is inconsistent with the findings of the previous studies of Rodriguez and Abreu (2003) and Saito et al. (1999) which found no significant difference in the level of FL anxiety across languages. In the case

of the present study, the FL anxiety varied significantly according to the specific target language and it seemed that the more familiar the learners were with the writing system and cultural backgrounds of the foreign language, the lower level of general FL anxiety they tended to experience in the classroom. Compared with French and Russian, Japanese is closer to the native language of the Chinese undergraduate subjects in terms of the writing system and cultural backgrounds. Such an element may have in part contributed to the less anxiety felt in the Japanese class. On the other hand, English, the other foreign language the Japanese-as-FL2 subjects studied simultaneously, has no cognates with either Chinese or Japanese and is immensely different from both of them with respect to the phonological system, writing system and cultural backgrounds. As a result, significantly greater anxiety in the English class has been reported among the students. Such a sharp contrast between the anxiety levels perceived in the learning of Japanese and English among native Chinese learners indicates that significant differences in terms of general FL anxiety may exist in a pairing of foreign languages where the two foreign languages are non-cognate but one is cognate to the native language of the learner. It, in turn, suggests that to some extent the distance between the two foreign languages under learning may affect the level of general FL anxiety experienced. In the simultaneous learning of two foreign languages, the more distant one foreign language is from the native language, the more likely it is to trigger general FL anxiety in the learning of it compared with the other foreign language which is closer to the learner's native language.

By contrast, the pairing of English-French and English-Russian, in which both foreign languages are distant to the subjects' native language, did not impose such a huge gap between the two foreign languages and in turn did not rouse significantly different levels of general FL anxiety in the two language classrooms. This comports with the finding yielded in the study of Rodriguez and Abreu (2003) in which the native Spanish learners showed non-significant differences in their general FL anxiety when learning simultaneously two cognate foreign languages (i.e., English and French). In

the present study, the Chinese learners who were learning two cognate foreign languages (i.e., English and French) and those who were learning two semi-cognate foreign languages (i.e., English and Russian) also demonstrated non-significant differences in general FL anxiety not only in the classrooms of French and Russian but in the learning of the same first foreign language - English. The similar findings of both studies may indicate that no matter how distant the two foreign languages under learning are from the native language, as long as the two are cognates or semi-cognates, the FL anxiety in both language classrooms will not differ significantly. But more studies in the context of native languages other than Chinese, Spanish and English, for instance, Arabic, Japanese, Indian, etc. need to be conducted to further prove it.

Aside from the differences detected in the levels of general FL anxiety, compared with the previous studies utilizing the FLCAS (e.g., Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1986; Saito et al., 1999), the Chinese subjects in the present study, i.e. the subjects with a non-Western native language, reported lower levels of anxiety when learning French, Japanese and Russian, lending support to Horwitz's contention that general FL anxiety might vary in different cultural groups (2001). Such a finding may also indicate that "general FL anxiety may be related in complex ways to a number of affective, cognitive and demographic variables" (Rodriguez & Abreu, 2003, p. 371). Motivation, one of the affective variables, for instance, may have had some impact on how the learners felt in the foreign language classrooms. The subjects in the present study were learning those second foreign languages as their major, among most of whom the major means the future career whereas the majority of the learners in Saito et al.'s study (1999) were enrolled in language classes simply to meet a language requirement. The former were more likely to be integratively motivated toward their language learning, which may have contributed to the impairing of their general FL anxiety (Gardner, Day & MacIntyre, 1992). In addition, the element of environment should also be considered. The fact that these language majors were immersed in a multitude of courses of the languages they majored in and were learning

these languages in an environment created to be as conducive to the feel of the authentic language use as possible might also be a plausible explanation.

As Saito et al. (1999) caution, the essence of FL anxiety is the threat to an individual's self-concept caused by the inherent limitations of communicating in an imperfectly mastered second or foreign language. Nowadays in mainland China, the communicative approach has gradually replaced the traditional grammar-translation approach in foreign language classrooms, making the foreign language classes more learner-centered and more communicative-task-oriented and providing abundant opportunities for students to practice their foreign language orally in class. Such a learning environment in the classroom is more likely to provoke anxiety among students who perceive themselves as having inadequate or lower levels of proficiency in the particular foreign language. This may explain in part why the FL1-FL2-Equal-Proficiency group exhibited similar levels of FL anxiety in their first and second foreign language classroom while the FL1-Higher-Proficiency group reported far less degree of FL anxiety in their first foreign language classroom than in their second and likewise the FL2-Higher-Proficiency group experienced greater FL anxiety in their first foreign language classroom than in their second. The finding that the students reported significantly higher level of FL anxiety in the less proficient language also coincided with the result of Ganschow et al.'s study (1994) which argued that poor FL skills are the cause of FL anxiety not the result. Most previous studies support the view that FL anxiety contributes to poor performance or achievement. Integrating the conflicting results from the present study and the previous ones, it might be more feasible to conclude that for one thing, anxiety plays an important role in determining students' success or failure in the FL classes, for another, students' proficiency in the foreign language under learning determines to some extent the level of general anxiety felt.

## CONCLUSION

As Rodriguez and Abreu (2003, p. 372) envisioned that “the inclusion of both semi-cognate and non-cognate languages in future research will yield relevant insights into the stability issue”, the present study using Chinese as the native language and English, French, Japanese, and Russian as the foreign languages extended the relevant FL anxiety stability research. With both direct and indirect evidence, the findings revealed that FL anxiety is a widespread and important factor in foreign/second language acquisition and the native language-foreign language pairing (e.g., cognate, semi-cognate or non-cognate pairing) may in part affect the general anxiety perceived in the classroom.

For language teachers teaching language majors in China, these findings may have significant pedagogical implications. To begin with, since language majors are required to learn two foreign languages simultaneously, the teachers of either language must be aware of what other language the students are learning. It is based on the knowledge of both languages, for instance, whether the two languages are cognates, semi-cognates, or non-cognates, that they can incorporate corresponding strategies in instruction to help students cope with the anxiety provoked by the learning of different foreign languages. Second, knowing that FL anxiety is universally possible in any FL classroom, teachers should make an effort to make the formal classroom learning of a foreign language less stressful. Last but not least, teachers should pay more careful attention to less proficient learners since they are the ones that are more likely to perceive anxiety in class and help them handle anxiety-provoking situations more effectively.

Although the present study yielded new insights into the stability issue by incorporating semi-cognate, non-cognate as well as non-alphabetic languages into the study and by utilizing both direct and indirect evidence suggested in Rodriguez and Abreu’s study (2003), there existed certain limitations. First and foremost, the participants were students from only three universities in central China and were not randomly selected. Furthermore, regarding the

research methods, if qualitative data from interviews with the subjects and observations in the classroom could be incorporated, more in-depth information may have been obtained and analyzed.

**Word count:** 4573 words, excluding References and Appendix.

**Acknowledgement:** The study has been funded by the National Humanities and Social Sciences Fund (Project number 08BYY027) and the Humanities and Social Sciences Fund of the Provincial Department of Education of Hubei, China (Project number 2008q023).

## THE AUTHOR

*Guo Yan* is an associate professor in the School of Foreign Languages of Huazhong University of Science and Technology in China. Her current research interests cover applied linguistics and translation studies. Her recent publications include *A study of college English teachers' teaching and students' use of language learning strategies from the perspective of correlation* (2007), *A process approach to teaching culture* (2008), and *Chinese college English learners' attitudes and behaviors in computer-assisted autonomous language learning* (2009).

Email: guoyan@mail.hust.edu.cn

## REFERENCES

- Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese. *Modern Language Journal*, 78, 155-168.
- Chen, Y. H. (2002). *The relationship between foreign language anxiety and English proficiency of EFL learners in Taiwan*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Kaohsiung First University of Science and Technology, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.
- Cheng, Y. (2002). Factors associated with foreign language writing anxiety. *Foreign*

*Language Annals*, 35(5), 647-656.

- Cheng, Y. (2004). A measure of second language writing anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(4), 313-335.
- Cheng, Y., Horwitz, E. K., & Schallert, D. R. (1999). Language anxiety: Differentiating writing and speaking components. *Language Learning*, 49, 417-446.
- Ehrman, M. E., & Oxford, R. L. (1995). Cognition plus: Correlates of language learning success. *Modern Language Journal*, 79, 67-89.
- Elkhafaiji, H. (2005). Listening comprehension and anxiety in the Arabic language classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 89, 206-220.
- Ganschow, L., Sparks, R. L., Anderson, R., Javorsky, J., Skinner, S., & Patton, J. (1994). Differences in language performance among high-, average- and low-anxious college foreign language learners. *Modern Language Journal*, 78, 41-55.
- Gardner, R. C., Day, J. B., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1992). Integrative motivation, induced anxiety, and language learning in a controlled environment. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 14, 197-214.
- Horwitz, E. K. (1986). Preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of a foreign language anxiety scale. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20, 559-562.
- Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112-126.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125-132.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1989). Anxiety and second language learning: Toward a theoretical clarification. *Language Learning*, 39, 251-275.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning*, 41, 85-117.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1994). The subtle effects of induced anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language Learning*, 44, 283-305.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Noels, K. A., & Clement, R. (1997). Biases in self-ratings of second language proficiency: The role of language anxiety. *Language Learning*, 47, 265-287.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bailey, P., & Daley, C. E. (1999). Factors associated with foreign language anxiety. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 20, 217-239.
- Price, M. L. (1991). The subjective experience of foreign language anxiety: Interview with highly anxious students. In E. K. Horwitz & D. J. Young (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp.

- 101-108). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rodriguez, M., & Abreu, O. (2003). The stability of general foreign language classroom anxiety across English and French. *Modern Language Journal*, 87, 365-374.
- Saito, Y., Horwitz, E. K., & Garza, T. J. (1999). Foreign language reading anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 83, 202-218.
- Sparks, R. J., & Ganschow, L. (1991). Foreign language differences: Affective or native language aptitude differences. *Modern Language Journal*, 75, 2-16.
- Sparks, R. J., & Ganschow, L. (1995). A strong inference approach to causal factors in foreign language learning: A response to MacIntyre. *Modern Language Journal*, 79, 235-244.
- Sparks, R. J., & Ganschow, L. (2001). Aptitude for learning a foreign language. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 90-111.
- Yan, J. X., & Horwitz, E. K. (2008). Learners' perceptions of how anxiety interacts with personal and instructional factors to influence their achievement in English: A qualitative analysis of EFL learners in China. *Language Learning*, 58, 151-183.
- Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: What does language anxiety research suggest? *Modern Language Journal*, 75, 426-439.

## APPENDIX

### Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (English Version)

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
5. It won't bother me at all to take more English (French / Japanese / Russian) classes.
6. During English (French / Japanese / Russian) classes, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at English (French / Japanese / Russian) than I am.
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
12. In English (French / Japanese / Russian) class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
14. I would not be nervous speaking English (French / Japanese / Russian) with native speakers.
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting in my English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
16. Even if I am well prepared for English (French / Japanese / Russian) class, I feel anxious about it.
17. I often feel like not going to my English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
18. I feel confident when I speak in English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
19. I am afraid that my English (French / Japanese / Russian) teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
21. The more I study for an English (French / Japanese / Russian) test, the more confused I get.
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.

23. I always feel that the other students speak English (French / Japanese / Russian) better than I do.
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking English (French / Japanese / Russian) in front of other students.
25. English (French / Japanese / Russian) class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my English (French / Japanese / Russian) class than in my other classes.
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English (French / Japanese / Russian) class.
28. When I'm on my way to English (French / Japanese / Russian) class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English (French / Japanese / Russian) teacher says.
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English (French / Japanese / Russian).
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English (French / Japanese / Russian).
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English (French / Japanese / Russian).
33. I get nervous when the English (French / Japanese / Russian) teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.