

English Language Anxiety In Learners During Study Abroad — Language Use In Homestay Context — 留学中の英語不安 —ホームステイ環境での英語使用

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Abstract

Second language (L2) learners try to make language gain through authentic interactions in study abroad (SA) contexts. However, entering into the home of strangers and building a relationship in L2 is a challenging task. As a consequence, there is a possibility that language anxiety, one of the affective factors, may interfere more with the amount of interactions L2 learners have while abroad. This paper first examines the experiences of 26 Japanese university students during a 15-week SA in Canada, comparing pre-departure anxiety and while-abroad anxiety to see the changes in learners' language anxiety level, and then focuses on the interview responses of learners with high anxiety. By analyzing the interview responses, some experiences related to language anxiety were highlighted. This study indicates that anxiety generally decreased after four weeks of SA in most cases. However, some exceptions were observed. First, learners who identified themselves as shy with high pre-departure anxiety continued to have high anxiety. Second, learners with limited English proficiency with high pre-departure anxiety continued to have high anxiety.

【Key word】 Study Abroad (SA), Language Anxiety, Language Use, Affective Factors, Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

要 旨

留学環境では、言語を使用する機会に恵まれるために、より自然に言語習得が起こると思われがちである。一方で、留学中には、外国語を使用して人間関係を築かなければならないために、外国語不安と呼ばれる情意要因が、言語使用を妨げる要因としてより強く作用する可能性をはらんでいる。本稿では、日本人大学生26名の、15週間に渡るカナダでの留学経験において、留学前と留学中の外国語不安度を比べ、外国語不安が留学中にどのように変化したかを調べた。さらに、外国語不安の高かった学習者の留学中のインタビューを検証し、どのような経験が外国語不安と関わりがあるかを探った。結果は以下である。まず、多くの学習者の外国語不安が、留学4週間後には下がった。しかし、これに当たらない例として、内気であると自己判断した学習者の外国語不安が高くあり続けたこと、そして、英語能力の低く不安が高かった学習者の外国語不安が高くあり続けたことも確認した。

【キーワード】 スタディーアブロード、外国語不安、言語使用、情意要因、第二言語習得

1. Introduction – The Assumption of Language Use and Language Gain

For second language (L2) learning, there is an assumption that authentic language-use experience afforded by SA may play an essential role in the development of L2 proficiency. As Goodwin and Natch (1988) note, “overseas the variety of linguistic opportunities is unlimited while the ‘need to know’ is everywhere around” (p. 15). In terms of language use opportunities, Brecht and Robinson (1995) state that “indeed, the contribution of study abroad to significant language gains is commonly believed to derive from the number of opportunities program participants have to engage in first-hand language practice on ‘the street,’ in restaurants, in shops, in the homes of native speaker friends and acquaintances as well as a variety of other out-of-class environments in which students find themselves while living in-country” (p. 317).

For these reasons, learners are encouraged by educators to make friends with native speakers and to interact with their homestay family members. For learners themselves, one of the essential purposes of the SA is to have as many L2 interactions as possible and make a lot of language gain. However, some learners with high language anxiety have difficulties in engaging in L2 interactions while abroad.

This paper has three objectives: 1) to review language anxiety in L2 and understand its significance in L2 communication, 2) to compare L2 learners’ pre-departure anxiety and while-abroad anxiety to see whether SA context decreases the anxiety level, and 3) to examine learner experiences related to language anxiety. The general underlying assumption is that language use will enhance language gain. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to identify experiences related to language anxiety which work adversely on L2 learners’ language use and the language gain.

2. Anxiety in Language Learning

2.1 Defining Anxiety

Various researchers explain why anxiety in language learning is an important issue. According to Young (1999), “...you are asking them to reveal themselves in a way which is very threatening because when they don’t know the language very well..., they are unsure of what kind of expression they are giving” (p. 5).

To understand language anxiety, it is crucial to review anxiety in the field of psychology, as well as communication anxiety in the field of communication and intercultural communication.

In the field of psychology, anxiety is defined by Spielberger (1972) as an unpleasant emotional state or cognition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry, and by activation or arousal of the automatic nervous system. Spielberger (1983) defines two types of anxiety. “Trait anxiety” is part of individual difference or personality, which has a stable level within a person. “State anxiety” is a temporary tension. In other words, people have some “trait anxiety” and it is part of individual differences and

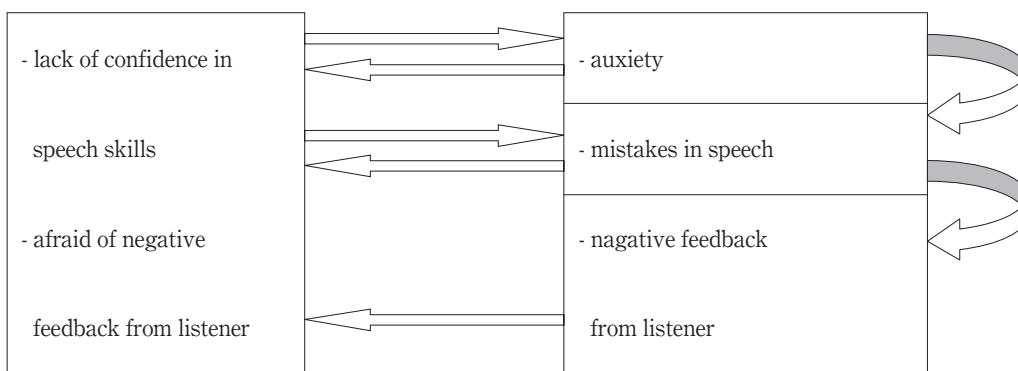
personality. However, if you have to give a speech or have an important test, you might feel temporary tension and this is “state anxiety”.

2.2 Communication Anxiety (L1)

Communication anxiety in this paper is defined as the level of anxiety and fear related to communication. It is reported that people with high trait anxiety tend to make low self evaluations of their own communicative competence (Yashima, 2004).

Sarason, Sarason and Pierce (1991) talk about 3 cognitive states in which communication anxiety is aroused; 1) when evaluating a situation as highly difficult or threatening; 2) when evaluating that you do not have the skills to do the task; and 3) when you cannot avoid an unhappy result, or expect failure. Because your cognitive activities are preoccupied with negative images and results, you are not able to engage yourself in cognitive activities related to doing the tasks. For instance, if you are worried about your lack of speech skills, making mistakes, and what listeners will think of you, this interferes with smooth cognitive activities related to the tasks, and as a result, you end up with a higher risk and possibility of failing. This vicious circle is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Vicious Circle of Communication Anxiety (Kondo & Yan, 1995)



Note. Adapted from Yashima, T. (2004) 外国語コミュニケーションの情意と動機 関西大学出版部 (p. 22).

Figure 1 shows that when anxiety is aroused, performance is influenced. As a result, the listeners’ feedback is negative. By cognitively being aware of bad performance, as well as the listeners’ negative feedback, anxiety becomes higher.

2.3 Characteristics of Language Anxiety (L2)

One of the affective factors known to influence communication in L2 is language anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardners’ view (1991a) is that language anxiety is specific to foreign or L2

language learning. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), language anxiety is defined as fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in a second or foreign language. This definition will be used in this paper.

Although the source of fear or apprehension when performing specifically in L2 is explained in various ways by different scholars, the most significant explanation is about the concept of self being at risk as described by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986). They report that the cause of having language anxiety is that the learners' concept of self is at risk, and they claim that there is no other learning in which the concept of self is at risk. When adults with intelligence, social abilities, and confidence cannot express their real self because of inadequate L2 skills, they become silent, worried and panicked.

Bailey (1981) also indicates something similar. According to Bailey, learners are faced with the need to protect or enhance their self-esteem. They will accordingly adjust the amount of L2 they use in order to do so: when self-esteem is highly threatened by L2 use, learners may reduce the amount of L2 they produce in order to protect self-esteem; when self-esteem is not threatened in L2 use, learners may feel at ease to produce more L2 without fear of damaging their sense of status. Another idea also put forward by Bailey is that challenges and threats to the learners' personal sense of status triggers anxiety, which inhibits learners' abilities and desires to use the L2 in social interactions.

2.4 Communication Anxiety (L1) and Language Anxiety (L2)

It is easily assumed that compared to speaking in the first language (L1), speaking in L2 will trigger higher language anxiety. However, there are not many research findings to confirm this point. McCroskey, Fayer and Richmond (1985) compare communication using L1 and L2, and point out that Puerto Ricans experienced higher anxiety when communicating in English, compared to communicating in their L1. McCroskey, Gudykunst and Nishida (1985), however, reported that Japanese university students did not show any differences in communication anxiety comparing L1 communication and English communication. On the other hand, Yashima (1998) reported that Japanese university students experienced higher anxiety when communicating in English, compared to communicating in their L1.

One similarity between communication anxiety and language anxiety is that language anxiety may occur in the similar vicious circle pattern seen with communication anxiety in Figure 1. Bailey (1981) notes that "one cannot identify the causal variable. Does anxiety impair students' oral fluency, or do they become anxious in oral production tasks because their speech skills are low?" (p. 68).

2.5 Manifestation of Classroom Language Anxiety

Many studies report language avoidance. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) note "the more

anxious student tends to avoid attempting difficult or personal messages in the target language” (p. 126). Young (1991), in a review of literature on L2 anxiety, lists the manifestations of anxiety, such as “avoidance of L2 use opportunities, competitiveness with others, “freezing up” during L2 performance, fidgeting, avoiding eye contact, coming to class unprepared, and using short-answer responses” (p. 430).

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b) note that learners with lower levels of anxiety are able to learn better, are more willing to volunteer answers in class, and interact more socially with target language speakers. Ganschow et al. (1996) also found that learners with lower levels of anxiety performed better than those with higher levels of anxiety. Therefore, anxiety is manifested most in learners’ reduction of their L2 use and their avoidance of L2 use opportunities. Table 1 shows a summary of the review of the manifestation of language anxiety.

Table 1: Summary of the Review of Manifestation of Language Anxiety

Higher Levels of Anxiety	Lower Levels of Anxiety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduction of L2 use - avoidance of L2 use opportunities - using short-answer responses - competitiveness with others - “freezing up” during L2 performance - fidgeting - avoid attempting difficult or personal messages in the target language - avoiding eye contact - coming to class unprepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - able to learn better - interact more socially with target language speakers - more willing to volunteer answers in class

2.6 Language Anxiety in the SA Context

Research on the manifestation of classroom language anxiety provides valuable information concerning the L2 learners’ language use in SA context. First, in an authentic SA context, compared to a classroom context, it is easy to assume that L2 learners have higher needs to maintain social psychological security. More specifically, class communication activities are designed to mainly practice language, whereas in authentic communication, L2 learners need to present themselves. Second, in authentic interactions, failing to communicate results in communication breakdown. Therefore L2 learners feel a higher degree of anxiety, which might make the risk of failing even higher. Third, language anxiety can discourage L2 learners from socializing and integrating using the L2 and as seen in communication anxiety, this can continue in a vicious circle. For instance, when L2 learners get negative feedback from interlocutors due to

a communication breakdown, they might make more mistakes, and if the anxiety is experienced and learned as associated with L2 interactions, anxiety is then further consolidated.

Language anxiety seems to be an inevitable troubling factor which interferes with the amount of language use while abroad. However, a study by Allen (2002) reports that anxiety decreased during the SA. He also suggests another important aspect of language anxiety, which is that SA learners experience different degrees of language anxiety, depending on the context of interactions. Furthermore, Allen reports that for the first two weeks of a six-week program, learners' anxiety levels remained high especially in complex interactions which involved cultural differences, whereas the anxiety level decreased in controlled short interactions, such as service encounters.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

26 second-year students from the College of Business Management at J. F. Oberlin University volunteered to participate in this study. 25 of the students were female, and 1 was male. They were SA participants for the length of 15 weeks at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in Canada.

This research was authorized by the J. F. Oberlin University Research Ethics Committee and followed the procedures required by the committee. First, the participants were notified about the purposes of the study, the data collection, and the procedure, and they signed two forms of informed consent: 1) to participate in this research and permit all of the data to be used for academic publications and presentations, and 2) to permit the interviews to be recorded. They were paid to participate in this research by the Institute for Language Education Research and Development at J. F. Oberlin University.

3.2 Data Collection

This research took the form of a longitudinal study with questionnaires, English proficiency tests, and interviews. To measure language anxiety, this paper used four questions (see Appendix 1) from the Willingness to Communicate Model, as adapted by MacIntyre et al. (1998), one of the most well known motivation and language use models, which takes L2 use as the indicator of learners' willingness to communicate. Once the questionnaires had been returned, the data was transferred into digital format. The anxiety level for each learner was determined by simply summing the frequencies selected for each question, then calculating the average percentage.

To measure English proficiency, learners took the Computerized Assessment System for English Communication (CASEC) test before departure. CASEC was used because it is a computer adaptive test which learners can take online in approximately 40 minutes and the

results are calculated only a few seconds after the test. Moreover, this test produces equivalent scores for the standardized TOEIC and TOEFL tests, which are relevant for research purposes.

Pre-departure interview, as well as while-abroad interview data was collected from all participants. During pre-departure interviews, learners were asked, for example, about what they were going to do in order to improve their L2 skills while abroad, any worries about life with the homestay families, and anxiety about English communication with host family. During the while-abroad interviews, learners were asked, for example, about what they actually were doing to improve their L2 skills, and about the life with the host family.

4. Results and Discussion from the Quantitative Data

This section presents the quantitative results. Table 2 shows sample size and the learners' pre-departure English proficiency test results. The learners are divided into four different groups according to the TOEIC (equivalent) scores of the CASEC proficiency test taken by all learners, with 5-7 learners in each group. The groups are the advanced-level group, the intermediate-level group, the pre-intermediate-level group, and the elementary-level group. The levels are used in this paper as a guide to talk about the trends in the results.

Table 2: Sample Size and Pre-departure English Proficiency in Each Group (n=25*)

		Sample Size
Advanced Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 600-699	5
Intermediate Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 500-599	7
Pre-Intermediate Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 400-499	6
Elementary Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 350-399	7

(*There were 26 participants, but 1 participant did not take the proficiency test)

4.1 Decrease in the Average Anxiety

**Table 3: Language Anxiety in Each Group (n=25*)
Pre and While-abroad**

		Time 1: Pre Anxiety Average % (SD)	Time 2: While-abroad Anxiety Average % (SD)
Advanced Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 600-699	41.0 (9.6)	32.0 (9.1)
Intermediate Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 500-599	57.9 (28.1)	55.0 (21.2)
Pre-Intermediate Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 400-499	77.5 (19.7)	66.7 (27.1)
Elementary Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 350-399	48.6 (25.6)	39.3 (42.2)

(*There were 26 participants, but 1 participant did not take the proficiency test)

Table 3 shows the average anxiety of students in each group before they left (Time 1: pre anxiety), and while-abroad (Time 2: while-abroad anxiety). The first significant result is that the average anxiety in all groups, from pre anxiety to while-abroad anxiety, went down.

The group which showed the greatest decrease is the pre-intermediate group, dropping by 10.8 points (77.5%, SD=19.7 to 66.7%, SD=27.1). The group which showed the second greatest decrease is the elementary group, dropping by 9.3 points (48.6%, SD=25.6 to 39.3%, SD=42.2). The third group is the advanced group, dropping by 9 points (41.0%, SD=9.6 to 32.0%, SD=9.1). The group which showed the least decrease is the intermediate group, by only 2.9 points (57.9%, SD=28.1 to 55.0%, SD=21.2).

4.2 Decrease in All Learners' Anxiety in the Advanced Group

The second significant result is that the anxiety level of all five learners in the advanced group went down while abroad. Table 4 shows each learner's raw anxiety level in the advanced group, indicating that the level went down for all learners. This result implies that L2 exchanges are not so threatening for this group of students. That is, daily interactions in the homestay context (such as talking about the day and topics related to the learners), as well as service encounters (i.e., ordering coffee in a shop) are not as threatening for learners in the advanced group.

**Table 4: Advanced Level Group's Learner Anxiety (n=5)
Pre and While-abroad**

			Time 1: Pre Anxiety (%)	Time 2: While-abroad Anxiety (%)
Advanced Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 600-699	learner 1	50	40
		learner 2	25	20
		learner 3	40	25
		learner 4	45	35
		learner 5	45	40

Note: The learners are listed in order of higher English proficiency to lower proficiency (i.e., learner 1 scored the highest on the English proficiency test).

The results suggest the advanced group learners are capable of handling these interactions, such as daily interactions in the homestay context and service encounters in their L2 with the English proficiency they already have. Therefore, in terms of language anxiety, by looking at the advanced group, SA experiences give them further confidence in their L2 use. However, it does not necessarily mean that promoting more language interactions results in language gain. A study by Freed (1990) found that it is not the amount but rather the type of contact which

matters in terms of linguistic gain. Freed reported that lower proficiency learners benefit more from social / oral interaction (e.g., speaking with native speakers). Higher proficiency learners, on the other hand, profit more from a variety of media, which provide extended interaction with extended discourse in reading and listening (e.g., reading newspapers, watching television). Therefore, learners in the advanced group need to be advised to engage themselves in extensive reading and listening, rather than spending their time only on L2 exchanges.

4.3 Learners with High Anxiety in the Elementary Group

The third significant result is from the elementary group. Table 5 shows all learners' anxiety levels in the elementary group. Two learners in the elementary group (learner 23 and learner 24) had high anxiety before they left. Those two learners' anxiety went up while abroad. It is also noticeable that excluding those two learners, all of the other learners' anxiety levels went down.

**Table 5: Elementary Level Group's Learner Anxiety (n=7)
Pre and While-abroad**

			Time 1: Pre Anxiety (%)	Time 2: While-abroad Anxiety (%)
Elementary Group	TOEIC (equivalent) 350-399	learner 19	45	40
		learner 20	55	25
		learner 21	35	15
		learner 22	35	0
		<u>learner 23</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>100</u>
		<u>learner 24</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>95</u>
		learner 25	10	0

Note: The learners are listed in the order of higher English proficiency to lower proficiency (i.e., in this group, learner 19 scored highest on the English proficiency test).

In the following section, the interview responses of learners with high anxiety will be looked at, and the experiences connected to their language anxiety will be highlighted.

5. Results and Discussion from the Interviews

Among the 26 learners in this study, four learners had 100% anxiety either as pre anxiety, while-abroad anxiety, or both pre and while-abroad. Table 6 shows these four learners. The following section highlights some of the issues which seem to be caused by high language anxiety by reviewing the while-abroad interview responses. Three major characteristics could be discerned from these interviews: shyness, not having enough skills, and fear of making mistakes

and self being at risk. These aspects can be mitigated by interacting with caretakers, or, in the case of one learner, dealt with by becoming a child in the family. All of the learner interview responses have been translated from the original Japanese into English by the researchers.

**Table 6: Learners with Very High (100%) Language Anxiety (n=4)
Pre and While-abroad**

Learner	TOEIC (equivalent)	Group	Time 1: Pre anxiety (%)	Time 2: While-abroad Anxiety (%)
learner 8 (shy)	580	Intermediate Group	95	100
learner 13 (shy)	475	Pre-Intermediate Group	100	100
learner 16 (childishness)	415	Pre-Intermediate Group	100	70
learner 23 (low English)	365	Elementary Group	85	100

5.1 Communication Anxiety and Shyness in L1

Shyness is common for Japanese people. This is supported by a study by Klopff (1984) which compared L1 communication anxiety of university students in 7 countries: the United States of America, Australia, Korea, China, the Philippines, Micronesia, and Japan. Among these students, when communicating in L1, the Japanese had the highest communication anxiety. Iwasaki, Eysenck and Eysenck (1977) reported that Japanese people are more introvert than British people. In the field of second language acquisition research, Asian learners, including Japanese learners, are reported to have less communication in the language classroom (Sato, 1982; Song, 1997). These results show that Asians, especially Japanese people, have the tendency to be less proactive and more passive in communication with unfamiliar interlocutors and the people they have just met. The implication of this shyness of Japanese people in the SA context would naturally be difficulties in L2 communication.

Learner 13 is a female Japanese university student who evaluated herself as shy, and who had very high anxiety as shown in Table 6 (100% to 100%). She did not have the habit of taking an active role in conversations, in either Japanese or English. Therefore, she mainly listened to conversations at the dinner table in her homestay and did not speak in the L2 very often. Learner 13 explains her behavior in regard to turn taking as “I never initiate the conversation myself. Only if I’m asked, will I speak” (Learner 13, while-abroad interview response).

In response to a question about the reasons why she felt nervous and worried about

speaking in L2 and avoided using it, learner 13 explained her extreme shyness as the prime cause of her language anxiety as follows.

I feel very shy in front of strangers, and I'm a nervous type of person. Even doing a normal presentation in Japan would make me feel panicky. I would be holding a paper to read, but lose track of where I should be reading. I feel really shy in front of strangers as well. When I meet people for the first time, I feel tense. I think this is why I can't speak well. When I ask friends about the first impression I give, they usually say something like a dark impression. I can't speak and that's why my friends say they don't understand me, so I think that's it. (Learner 13, while-abroad interview response)

Learner 13 further explained the reason for this extreme shyness as being a lack of experience talking to new people and strangers.

I think it comes from lack of experience. I never have to be in a situation like that. I'm always with someone I know so I don't have to force myself to deal with new people. Even if I'm introduced to new people [in Japan], if I'm with my mother, I don't have to talk to strangers. When I talk to my cousins, my sister acts like my translator and she speaks for me so it's good. I usually don't have to go anywhere on my own, so that's it. I'm the youngest in my family, so I'm a little emotionally dependent. (Learner 13, while-abroad interview response)

Learner 8 is also a female Japanese learner who evaluated herself as shy, and who had the TOEIC equivalent of 580 in the intermediate group. Despite her rather high English proficiency level, her anxiety was high before she left, and went up to 100% while abroad (95% to 100%). Shyness was a strong trigger for language anxiety and even overcame high English proficiency in her case. "In the classroom, I can't speak up. The class instructor told me that she thought I was shy" (Learner 8, while-abroad interview response).

The interview responses in our research observed high trait anxiety triggering high communication anxiety in L1. This supports Yashima's claim (2004) introduced earlier that people with high trait anxiety tend to make low self evaluations of their own communicative competence (in L1), which means people with high trait anxiety tend to have high communication anxiety (in L1). Our research further observed that having communication anxiety and shyness in L1 triggers high language anxiety (in L2). Shyness, a common behavior trait among Japanese compared to many other nationalities, tends to cause more difficulties in authentic L2 interactions in SA context.

5.2 Not Having Enough Skills to Do the Task

The following interview response is from learner 23. She is in the elementary group and is limited in her English proficiency. Her anxiety was high before she left for Canada, and went up even higher while abroad, as shown in Table 6 (85% to 100%). She explains how her lack of skills made her withdraw from L2 interactions in her host family. This supports the claim introduced earlier (Sarason et al., 1991) that there are 3 cognitive states which arouse communication anxiety, including not having the skills to do the task.

On weekdays, we eat meals together, so I speak [English]. But, when I feel I want to say something, and think in my head how to say it, and when I'm about to say it, the conversation topic is over, so I can't say [anything about that] anymore. So, I always feel oh... then let it go, because the conversation keeps moving forward with everyone. (Learner 23, while-abroad interview response)

Speed is crucial in interacting in real interactions. Not being able to respond quickly enough makes learners withdraw from L2 exchanges. Learner 23 repeatedly talked about how she needs to improve her speaking. She felt pressured to improve her English skills, and so be able to communicate with her host family. "Oh, but if I can speak [English], well if I just speak [English], there's no problem, or I won't have any problems. I feel I have to learn to speak" (Learner 23, while-abroad interview response).

Because she needs a long time to produce any English sentences, in her homestay context the only interlocutor who was patient enough with her was her host mother. It was clear that low English proficiency plus lack of confidence interfered with her L2 interactions. She also talked about feeling awkward only listening to others. "I listen a lot by saying ah ha, ah ha, and I have many things I want to say, but I can't do them in English, I mean there are many things I can't say in English" (Learner 23, while-abroad interview response).

In response to the question of why she felt nervous about speaking in the L2, learner 23's reply was the following. "I don't know if my English is correct. Also, I know more than anybody how my English is not good enough. That's why" (Learner 23, while-abroad interview response). It is clear that low English proficiency triggers the language anxiety. However, some learners with low English proficiency do not have high language anxiety. Therefore, there is still a need to look into the triggers of language anxiety in elementary level learners.

The previously mentioned shy learner 8 analyzed herself and explained the reason for having high language anxiety as lack of grammatical knowledge. It should be noted that despite her lack of confidence and low self evaluation of her English proficiency, she was tested and fell into the intermediate group.

I haven't really studied [English] grammar very hard until now. While students who came into the university by the regular university entrance exam procedure must have studied [English] very hard, I haven't done it. I feel that might be [the cause of] it. I begin to worry about the very basic [grammatical] points. (Learner 8, while-abroad interview response)

5.3 Fear of Making Mistakes and Self Being at Risk

The definition of language anxiety stated earlier, which is fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in a second or foreign language, can be seen in the following interview response. This experience is reported by learner 8, a shy learner who is nevertheless in the intermediate proficiency group. Learner 8 describes being afraid of making mistakes in L2 in front of her Japanese classmates and friends. Her interview response also illustrates another definition of language anxiety, which is self being at risk.

In this class, everyone has strong personality, and everyone can speak English really well. A friend I'm always with is pretty good at English. So, sometimes, even in Japan too, we try to play a game-like conversation of, "let's speak English". When I speak, I am told "that's wrong" in a very strong tone, then, I feel afraid of that... In the classroom, I cannot volunteer to speak up either. (Learner 8, while-abroad interview response)

Interview responses also highlight the some possible ways in which language anxiety can be mitigated. The following sections introduce interacting with caretakers, and becoming a child in the family.

5.4 Interacting with Caretakers

Learners can be exposed to a variety of interlocutors for communication in the L2. Pellegrino (2005) talks about "caretakers" as a type of interlocutor, which can be a source of L2 learning experience in SA context. The interview responses in this section show that learners feel more comfortable with caring interlocutors, such as host mothers. It would be ideal for learners to have caretakers while abroad. Pellegrino (2005) summarizes the caretaker role as follows:

"Caretakers," defined as individuals who aid or contribute to the language-learning experience through explicit language instruction, informal language use, feedback, correction, and use of "foreignese" or the language adapted to learners' level for greater accessibility. Caretakers may be native or non-native speakers and may play a wide variety of roles in learners' lives, such as language instructors, resident directors, host-family members, roommates, or friends. They may be trained to be language caretakers (such as language teachers) or untrained, and caretaking activities may be expected based

on the type of relationship (e.g., classroom and homestay situations) or unexpected (e.g., strangers). In addition, caretaking activities may be desired and even overtly requested by learners or may be undesired and even embarrassing to learners, depending on the goals and preferences of the learners. Therefore, learners encounter many different types of caretaking relationships with others in their environment and many different styles and approaches to caretaking methods. (Pellegrino, 2005, p. 56)

The previously mentioned learner 23 lived with a host mother, a host father, and two host sisters, 11 and 13 years old. She did not feel comfortable speaking to her host sisters, as she thought they neither understood her nor wanted to wait for her to finish sentences. However, learner 23 was able to speak to her host parents. She felt especially comfortable talking to the host mother.

Well, my host parents know that I can't speak [English], that's probably why they listen to me carefully and wait for me to say things. The children, I think that they only understand me a little bit, so I can't actively speak to them. (Learner 23, while-abroad interview response)

The previously mentioned shy learner 13 lived with a host mother, a 17 year-old host sister, a 14 year-old host brother, and a Brazilian university student who was also staying with this family. In the following interview response, learner 13 explains how she felt comfortable during one-to-one conversation with her host mother, but did not feel comfortable enough to join in the conversation held by a number of native speakers.

When I'm with my host mother alone, she waits for my very slow speed. But, when the high school kid, the junior high school kid, and the other Brazilian home stay student are there, the speed of conversations is really fast, because everyone can speak so quickly. I can understand what they are talking about, so sometimes I have things I want to say, but if I join the conversation, I'm afraid of the conversation speed suddenly dropping. So, unless I'm asked, I just listen and kind of giggle. (Learner 13, while-abroad interview response)

Having a caretaker around is very reassuring for the L2 learners abroad, especially for learners with high anxiety. However, some learners do not live with caretakers and this can trigger higher anxiety. The previously mentioned learner 8 (95% to 100% anxiety) did not have a caretaker in her homestay family. She lived with a host mother and a host father and both of them were very busy working. According to learner 8, every evening after an early dinner, the host parents turned off all the lights in the kitchen and the living room, then retired to their

room. Therefore, learner 8 had almost no interaction besides the dinner table conversations.

Some other participants (who do not have high anxiety) reported about the lack of interaction. For instance, learner 1 lived with host parents and four other study abroad university students, and she was concerned about the lack of closeness with her host mother. Learner 7 lived with host parents and a three-year-old boy and a one year-old girl. She was stressed by the crying of the baby and the young child, and mentioned about the lack of care she received from her busy host parents.

Having caretakers in their homestay family was also reported by other participants with low anxiety. For instance, learner 19 lived with a host mother, a host father, and two other study abroad students (a Canadian and a Saudi Arabian). She reported that she enjoyed talking and spending time with her host parents at home very much. Therefore, she always wanted to go home right after class.

5.5 Being a Child in the Family

Pellegrino (2005) notes that the level of anxiety changes depending on the interlocutors, especially the need to maintain social psychological security related to interactions with different age groups. For example, Pellegrino explains “When the interlocutors are...closer to the age of the learner, some learners express even greater concern for their self-presentation, fearing to look like a fool before teenagers and young adults” (p. 75). Pellegrino describes a similar effect for learners interacting with small children.

However, Pellegrino also explains that learners sometimes feel great ease interacting with children and suggests that this ease may come from being allowed to be childish when interacting with children in L2. There is an interesting tactic reported by L2 learners to control language anxiety by using “childishness”: this prevents greater fear, since people who are “childish” cannot be expected to know or understand mature topics of conversations. Bailey (1983) also explains about adopting childishness in the language classroom to control apprehension.

This pattern of adopting childishness was seen in learner 16. It was surprising to note that her anxiety went down from a pre anxiety of 100% to while-abroad anxiety of 70%. One explanation is that she was not shy. Another explanation may be her adjustment into a family with two young children. She lived with a host mother, a host father, an 8 year-old host sister, and a 13 year-old host brother. In fact learner 16 became like a younger sister of the 8 year-old girl, which made learner 8 extremely comfortable at her homestay environment even with her limited English.

There are a couple of important points about learner 16. First, she was initially assigned a different host family, but soon after arrival she showed dissatisfaction and asked to move to a different host family. Learner 16 required a lot of attention from the administrators at the beginning of her SA life. In the new host family she was comfortable, mostly due to the full

attention she received, which she needed to feel less anxious about her L2 interactions. Another important point is that learner 16 was not shy. This is why after she changed her host family, she was able to be herself and communicate in L2.

We talk during meals, laugh together and answer. They know my English is bad, so I practice pronunciation by saying [a word] many many times. They say “ask”, so I do that... Yes, many times. I’m not good with L and R, so I continuously say “sour, ur, ur, ur”. Like this, many times. (Learner 16, while-abroad interview response)

Learner 16 talked about her weakness in oral skills. She felt that she was poor at pronunciation as well as listening. In her homestay, she tried to practice her pronunciation whenever she could.

I can’t be understood unless I tell them many times about what I want to do. If my host mother can’t understand me, then the 8 year-old child says something like “is it that?”, then I say “oh, that’s right”, then I say one more time, one more time, and repeat the same word over and over, like “apple, apple, apple, apple”. So, they probably think “she wants to hear”. (Learner 16, while-abroad interview response)

Yesterday, I got home, and the 8 year-old child was home, so we jumped rope together, and ran around the house and played. Like that. My host mother is really a nice person, so I’m now having fun. My host father has a sense of humor. The other day, when I asked “what’s for dinner?” He said “you can guess”. “Ah...guess?” I didn’t know at that time what this word meant. So I asked “what?” then he said “deer or cow” and something like that, so I said “huh? animals?” and it was like that, then I realized that the word meant estimate, but I didn’t know the word in Japanese, so I brought the dictionary and asked him to type in the spelling. Like this, I learn English, in the new home. (Learner 16, while-abroad interview response)

According to learner 16, the host mother and father checked her English grammar. Learner 16 plays the role of a child learning a language.

Grammar as well, I say it, then they say it again, so I learn how to express it. Also, when I ask what the meaning is, they really try hard to explain until I understand (Learner 16, while-abroad interview response).

6. Conclusions

This paper first reviewed the significance of language anxiety by how it triggers a reduction of L2 use and avoidance of L2-use opportunities. Next, by comparing pre departure and while-abroad anxiety levels, it was observed that after 4 weeks learners' language anxiety levels went down in general. Finally, interview responses highlighted possible reasons for exceptional cases. First, communication anxiety and shyness in L1 was a predictor of very high language anxiety in L2. Also, learners with low English proficiency who had high pre anxiety continued to have high anxiety. The interview responses also illustrated the importance of caretakers' support, especially for learners with high anxiety.

Understanding the manifestation of language anxiety and its effect on L2 language interactions will help educators prepare L2 learners better. For instance advance preparation of learners' knowledge of social skills will be beneficial. Aikawa (2000) points out that lack of social skills, such as choice of topics and adjusting one's speech by checking partners' verbal and non-verbal feedback, causes high communication anxiety. Social skills are practical skills used in authentic communication, and they should be taught to prepare sojourners for authentic L2 interaction in the real world abroad.

Finally, informing educators, administrators, and homestay family members about difficulties that learners may experience in expressing themselves in the L2 can help learners feel more comfortable and productive. With this support, L2 learners abroad may be able to build confidence more quickly and engage themselves more in L2 use. In addition, future research into SA should incorporate further investigations of encouraging language use to further support the learners' SA experiences and enhance their language learning opportunities.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire items to establish anxiety levels.

Questionnaire Items	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Almost always	Always
	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Do you feel nervous when you are asked <u>how to get to a place</u> in English by an English speaker?						
Do you feel <u>nervous</u> when you have to speak in English?						
Do you feel <u>worried</u> when you have to speak to a native speaker?						
Do you feel <u>worried</u> that people around you who can speak English might think your <u>English is not correct and is strange</u> ?						