

THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL DIFFERENCES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AMONGST STUDENTS FROM CHINA

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Abstract

Language learning anxiety has been of interest to language educators for more than two decades and research on this psychological construct has been increasing. This research indicates that learners experience a kind of psychological apprehension, which, at times can be damaging to the learning process. While this psychological apprehension has been investigated, how this apprehension is experienced by learners to whom English is both a foreign and second language has not been adequately documented in transnational locations.

The paper examines the learning experiences of students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the transnational location of the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU). Using both qualitative and quantitative data collection amongst a sample of 109 PRC students, the research raises questions relating to their anxiety in learning in English and their provincial origins in China. The possible sources of anxiety in learning subjects through the English language are discussed for pedagogical implications

Key words: English Language, Japan, China, anxiety, classroom, PRC students.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In 2007, the total number of study abroad students was just over 3.02 million compared to 1.9 million in the year 2000. This was an increase of 1.12 million according to UNESCO/OECD statistics (UNESCO, 2009; OECD, 2009). In 2007, the international student mobility market share was as follows: United States 19.7%, United Kingdom 11.6%, Germany 8.6%, France 8.2%, Australia 7%, and Japan 4.2% with no statistics for China, Singapore and Malaysia (OECD, 2007).

In Japan, the Japanese government is aiming to promote international student programs, and internationalization of Japanese universities has begun the Global 30 project, in which selected universities are organised to attract student applications for newly developed courses offered in English. The well known universities selected (7 public and 6 private universities) are seen as model institutions and are estimated to receive a budget of 200 to 400 million yen a year in funding. The Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) has been left out of the Global 30 as the Ritsumeikan Trust had preferred the Ritsumeikan University over APU for participation in the project. As of May 2008, however, APU had continued to overtake other universities in Japan, and become the premier university having the largest number of international students. It had 2,644 international students, having steadily passed Waseda University (2,608 students) and the Tokyo University (2,608 students) [Jasso, 2009].

In 2007, there were 370,000 Chinese students studying abroad and according to the International Development Agency's report (Banks, Olsen and Pearce, 2007), this number will continue to grow with the PRC becoming the source for the largest number of international students. In 2025, the figure is expected to double and reach 640,000 students. In 2009, there was a 61 % increase in undergraduate students going to the United States, and a 31 % increase in students attending Australian undergraduates and graduate schools up to 17,080. In terms of students coming to Japan there was an increase of 8 % (+ 6,316 students) to 79,082, with 40,390 undergraduate students and 18, 842 graduate students. Looking at the study destinations of PRC students, 26.56 % went to the United States with Japan receiving 21.53 %, followed by Australia (13.53%) and the United Kingdom (13.31%).

At APU, Chinese students represent 39 % of incoming APU undergraduate students (China, Korea and Taiwan account for over 67 %). In keeping with APU's policy of maintaining multiculturalism on campus, the percentage of PRC students has been limited up to fifty percent of the international students recruited in any year (APU 2010 International Students Recruitment Strategy, 2010). The 50 % cap on PRC students at APU is expected to raise the desirability of APU among PRC students arriving in Japan. In 2009, there were 655 PRC students at APU. Of them 611 were undergraduates (*Crossroads*, 2009: 71).

The substantial migration of PRC students from middle-income families can be explained by the existing theoretical perspectives (Castles and Miller, 1993; Skeldon, 1995). Transnational strategies among Chinese households reflect the accumulation of particular types of capital at different sites around the world (Ong, 1999; Waters, 2003). According to Aihwa Ong (1999: 19), "among transnational Chinese subjects, those most able to benefit from their participation in global capitalism celebrate flexibility and mobility". PRC student migrants to Japan practice a distinctly transnational 'flexible' form of mobility by which social and economic ties are maintained with more than one country simultaneously (Basch et al., 1994). From this perspective, culture becomes highly malleable, suggesting the ability of individuals to actively synthesize several different cultural perspectives into what Mitchell has called 'the language of the global economic subject' (1997: 551). This strategic cultural 'self fashioning' (Mitchell, 1997: 30) is often achieved through 'overseas experience'. This 'overseas experience' has to be a particular 'organization of diversity' (Hannerz, 1996) that requires learning the language of the global economy at particular sites in pursuit of very particular forms of culture. Thus, Europe and America are placed at the top of the hierarchy for international educational credentials (Ong, 1999: 90). By extension of the argument, PRC students in Japan may be in search of the kinds of symbolic capital that have international recognition and value. In this regard, Japan, as the most developed Asian country, has been the destination for higher education for PRC students for more than a hundred years since the early decades of the twentieth century.

Related studies and methodology

A varied range of studies have been carried out among students learning English within and outside China. As this study seeks to comment on PRC students learning English in Japan at a specific transnational location, only related studies are cited in this paper.

Zhang (2000, 2001) used one hundred and forty-five PRC students from a randomly selected sample among a total of 410 student cohort attending compulsory English communication skills programmes at two tertiary institutions in Singapore. The students were divided into groups based on those who had finished their second year of senior middle school and students who were university freshmen in China. These two groups, originating in PRC but studying English in Singapore were compared to comprehend their experiences in language learning. The study used instruments developed by Horwitz (1986) and Saito et al (1999) to ask students generally about how they felt about ESL learning in Singapore, the difficulties they faced with, their past learning experiences, their desired learning objectives and their overall concern while studying and living in Singapore, with some reflections on the differences between EFL learning and teaching in their home country and Singapore. The research was able to uncover the apprehension experienced by ESL learners from a unanimous Chinese background.

Guangwei Hu (2003) has conducted a study on 439 post-secondary PRC students in Singapore to find out the 'significant differences' between the economically and socioculturally developed and less developed areas in China. His findings show how students from regions of varying economic and sociocultural development differ in their English proficiency, previous learning experiences, classroom behaviors, and language learning and use strategies. The study also examines the contextual factors that have contributed to these differences among the regionally differentiated groups.

The fieldwork at APU was done in the spring semester and fall semester of 2009 Academic Year. An earlier estimation that questionnaire distribution and collection would be easily completed was proved false by the low returns. An internet based survey was abandoned as it was felt that not all PRC students would participate. Besides, the problem of non-PRC students completing the internet based survey would

have been difficult to detect as no personal details of students were raised in the questionnaire. Two sources were eventually identified as being able to reach PRC students at APU. The Chinese Association at APU had a monthly event. With the help of the Association officials, a few months were spent in interviewing PRC students attending the events. In some instances, students volunteered to complete the forms and send them over to the researcher. Such students, however, never returned any of the questionnaires. Only face-to-face interviews produced the best results. A few professors especially those who taught large undergraduate classes had agreed to help in distributing the questionnaire to PRC students. As APU had a total of 611 PRC students in 2009, the returns from 109 PRC students were considered adequate for the study. The sample represents one-sixth of the population of PRC students studying at APU.

The content of the questionnaire instrument was not drawn up by the researcher. Instead the questions were adapted from the questionnaires developed by leading researchers in the field. The scales and questionnaire items developed by Mao-jin (2001), Zhang (2001) and Horwitz et.al. (1986) were adopted as questions in the survey instrument. ‘A Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)’ developed by Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999) was incorporated into the survey instrument. FLCAS, which comprises 33 items followed by five alternatives or a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strong agree) to 5 (strong disagree) was adapted from the instrument in Horwitz (1986) and Saito et.al. (1999). The reliability of the instrument has been reported to be high in several studies (Horwitz et.al., 1986; Saito et.al, 1999). This helped overcome issues of validity and reliability.

All researchers, beginning with Horwitz et al (1986), have used anxiety as a form of language experience of foreign students learning English language. Horwitz et al (1986: 128) define anxiety as “a distinctive complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 5) maintain that language anxiety should be seen as “a stable personality trait referring to the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking in the second language”. Thus, there are manifold interpretations about language anxiety. Yet, language anxiety can still be defined as confined to specific situations like the classroom in which the student experiences a psychological tension in learning (Horwitz, 1986; Horwitz et.al., 1986; Young, 1999). Amongst all the studies conducted so far, research has shown that learner’s lack of proficiency in the target language is a major contributor to their

anxiety (Horwitz et.al, 1986; Saito et.al, 1999). As to its effect, this anxiety can be both a strong motivational variable, which can stimulate learners, and a debilitating factor, which prevents the learner from achieving the expected goals. In other words, there is a correlation between student's language anxiety and their language learning achievement (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz et.al, 1986).

Analysis

The study began with the following questions to observe the experiences of the students from China.

- Do the Chinese students experience language anxiety when they learnt English (or in English) at APU.
- Was there a significant association between their provincial origins (coastal versus inland) and their language learning experiences?
- If they experienced language anxiety, in what specific aspects was their anxiety revealed?

Of the total 109 students, females formed 66% per cent of the respondents. In the case of Japan and especially at APU, more girls could have arrived to gain a liberal undergraduate degree before gaining a job in Japanese companies in China. This view can be augmented from the fact that China has replaced the United States as the major trading partner for Japan in recent years. This means most of Japan's manufacturing for export is carried out in China and an increased number of PRC nationals are in demand for work in China as well as in Japan. As most middle-class families in China have either one or two children, gender skewedness can be explained only as a utilitarian economic orientation than as cultural outcomes.

The students were asked of their first language (dialects) spoken by them at their home. Forty-four percent (44 %) of the respondents reported using Mandarin at home. However, 99 % of the students reported that their language of study at school was in Mandarin. The data shows a significant number of the respondents being bilingual in a dialect and Mandarin, while their language of study made them all become literate only in Mandarin.

Table 1. Respondents Age and Age of learning languages. (N=109)

	M	SD
Age of respondents	19.5	1.3
Age of beginning learning of Chinese	3.8	2.3
Age of beginning learning of English	9.9	2.2

Note: M = Means; SD = Standard deviation

Table 1 shows the age of the respondents, and the age at which they began learning Mandarin and English. The mean ages of respondents was 19.5. Thus, the students are young having left China after their high-school. The ages at which they began learning Chinese and English show significant variations. The means and standard deviations for learning Chinese show small differences M = 3.8, SD = 2.3. The students appear to have started schooling in Mandarin at an early age. English language learning began later, M = 9.9, SD = 2.2. The explanations for these variations can be understood by observing the students origins in China. Among the students, 68.9 % are from coastal provinces with 31.1 % coming from inland provinces.

As the students are between seventeen and twenty-four years of age, their pursuit of education remains the major reason for their coming to Japan than integrating themselves into Japan's economy. Their aim appears to be in participating in Japan's companies that have spread from Japan into China.

As the population of students in this study came from PRC and shared fairly similar characteristics owing to their exposure to socialization in their high school education, it was assumed that they represented a normal population from which the coastal and inland groups were drawn. The Wilcoxon test, also known as the Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the two-independent-samples *t* test. These tests are the most frequently used alternatives to the two-independent-samples *t* test. They help pool all of the data values and rank them from smallest to largest. The average rank for each of the two groups allow for observation of tied values. Such tied values are assigned the average of the ranks. The average ranks, when they are large enough, allow for the null hypothesis to be rejected (Norusis, 2008: 460-461).

Table 2 provides a summary for all the FLCAS items for the total respondents as well as for the provincial origin groups. As used in Saito et.al. (1999), an average mean of 3 and above was taken as indicating higher anxiety in the experience of learning English. Among the total respondents, FLCAS items 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27 and 31 emerged as instances in which all students experienced anxiety in

learning English. Students reported that they trembled with fear when they knew ‘that they are going to be called up to speak English in classes. This usually happened when teachers asked a routine question to be verbally answered by all students in class.

Students also reported that during English classes, they found themselves not concentrating on the class proceedings but ‘thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course’. They started to panic when having to speak without preparation in English based classes. They were apprehensive of the anguish of some students about English based classes. In English classes the students felt embarrassed to volunteer answers to questions, as well as to get so nervous that they forgot the things they knew. Even if the students are well prepared for English classes, they felt nervous about classes. These anxieties often made them feel like not going to classes. They felt afraid (anxious) that the teacher is ever ready to correct every mistake they make. Studying for English tests made them extremely confused and speaking in such classes made them more tense and nervous. The speed at which lessons in English based classes moved made the students worry about getting left behind. They became nervous and confused when speaking in English based classes, as well as when the teacher raised questions for which they had not prepared. When the 14 FLCAS items (numbers. 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27 and 31) were compared for similar patterns among the coastal and inland provincial groups, the overall observed patterns were similar except for item 11. Item 11, the apprehension of anguish felt by students was not significant among students from inland provinces. The rest of the items were significant for only one group or not significant to both regional groups.

In observing within regional patterns of the FLCAS scores, some similarities and differences could be observed. In the case of the coastal group, FLCAS items 1, 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30 and 31 were significant at $p < .05$ level. Items 1, 18, 24, and 30 were newer items that were significant only among students from the coastal provinces. For the inland group, FLCAS items 3, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29 and 31 emerged as significant. Items 4, 23, and 29 were newer items that were significant only among students from the inland provinces. Thus, twelve items (3, 6, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27, and 31) are shared by both groups. The coastal group however reported 17 items, one item more than the 16 items significant among the inland group of students.

The coastal group of students reported the following experiences of learning English:

- Never felt sure of them when they speak in English (Item 1).
- Fear of being called on to speak English in class (Item 3).

- During class, thought about things that had nothing to do with the English classes (Item 6).
- Felt at ease during tests in English based class (Item 8).
- They got nervous in English based class that they forgot the things they knew (Item 12).
- Felt embarrassed to volunteer answers in their English based classes (Item 13).
- Felt anxious / nervous even when well prepared for English based class (Item 16).

Table 2
FLCAS Scores for all students
(N = 109)

	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) Items	All		Coastal		Inland	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak in English.	2.96	1.09	3.04	1.09	2.79	1.11
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in using English in class.	2.52	0.95	2.40	0.92	2.79	0.96
3	I tremble because of fear when I know that I'm going to be called on to speak English in class.	3.22	1.04	3.25	1.10	3.15	0.91
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.	2.95	0.93	2.93	0.87	3.00	1.06
5	It would not bother me at all to take more English using classes.	2.48	1.07	2.49	0.97	2.45	1.27
6	During English using class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course	3.32	1.11	3.29	1.09	3.41	1.16
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	2.85	1.07	2.86	1.08	2.82	1.07
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my English based class.	2.98	0.85	3.03	0.86	2.88	0.85
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English in my class.	3.02	0.99	3.00	0.95	3.06	1.08
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my English based subject class	2.92	1.11	2.92	1.07	2.94	1.19
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over English based class	3.04	0.92	3.12	0.95	2.85	0.83
12	In English based class, I get so nervous that I forget things I know	3.27	1.07	3.26	1.11	3.30	0.98
13	I feel embarrassed to volunteer answers in my English based class.	3.12	1.14	3.10	1.12	3.18	1.21
14	I am not nervous speaking with people who speak in English only.	2.49	1.00	2.42	0.99	2.64	1.02
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	2.64	0.96	2.60	0.92	2.73	1.06
16	Even if I am well prepared for English language based class, I feel anxious/nervous about it	3.17	1.12	3.21	1.06	3.09	1.25

Table 2 FLCAS Scores for all students - Continued

17	I often feel like not going to my English only based class.	3.63	0.90	3.58	0.84	3.76	1.03
18	I feel confident when I speak in my English based class.	2.91	0.93	3.04	0.86	2.64	1.02
19	I am afraid that my English teacher in English based class is ready to correct every mistake I make.	3.37	0.97	3.33	1.01	3.45	0.90
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called in my English based class.	2.94	1.04	2.96	1.11	2.91	0.87
21	The more I study for an English based test, the more confused I get.	3.21	1.13	3.22	1.05	3.18	1.31
22	I don't feel any pressure when I prepare very well for English based class.	2.51	0.92	2.47	0.88	2.61	1.02
23	I always feel that other students speak in English better than I do.	2.95	0.99	2.90	1.01	3.06	0.96
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	2.98	0.94	3.08	0.96	2.76	0.86
25	English based class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.	3.04	1.01	3.04	0.97	3.03	1.13
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my English based class than in my other classes.	3.32	0.94	3.34	0.96	3.27	0.91
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English based class.	3.34	1.02	3.26	1.04	3.52	0.97
28	When I'm on my way to English based class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	2.67	0.87	2.77	0.90	2.45	0.75
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English based class teacher says.	2.74	0.96	2.56	0.91	3.12	0.99
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.	2.96	0.94	3.01	0.99	2.85	0.83
31	I am afraid the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	3.26	1.10	3.33	1.02	3.12	1.26
32	I would probably feel comfortable around people who only speak English.	2.70	0.90	2.71	0.93	2.66	0.82
33	I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions for which I haven't prepared.	2.61	1.00	2.56	1.00	2.73	1.00

- Felt like not going to English based class (Item 17).
- Felt confident when speaking in English based classes (Item 18).
- Teacher in English based class was ever ready to correct every mistake I made (Item 19).
- The more I study for an English based test, the more confused I get (Item 21).
- Felt very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students (Item 24).
- Worried about getting left behind as English based classes moved very quickly (Item 25).
- Felt more tensed and nervous in English based classes than in any other classes (Item 26).
- Got nervous and confused when speaking in English based classes (Item 27).
- Felt overwhelmed by the number of rules to learn to speak English (Item 30).
- Afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak in English (Item 31).

Among the above learning experiences, it must be noted that eleven of the FLCAS items (3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 16, 19, 24, 25, 26 and 27) are direct classroom experiences while others are more indicative of their concerns to improve their English performance (item 1, 17, 18, 21, 30 and 31) and their ability to having psychologically adjusted to using English. This may be as a result of their receiving their education at APU, which allows them to experience spoken English with non-Chinese teachers and a multi-cultural society in which English is widely used on the campus and amongst students.

The inland group of students reported on similar experiences that were slightly different from the coastal group. While they shared experiences of learning English as indicated by the similar items (3, 6, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27 and 31), they differed in reporting four newer experiences (item 4, 11, 23 and 29). They also did not share with the coastal provincial group of students the learning experiences as reported in items 1, 8, 18, 24 and 30. As the shared experiences amongst both groups have been reported for the coastal group, the four newer experience of the inland group are listed below:

- Felt frightened when they did not understand what the teacher was saying in English (Item 4).
- Don't understand why some people get so upset over English based classes (Item 11).
- Always feeling that other students speak better in English (Item 23).
- Got nervous when they did not understand every word said by the English based class teacher (Item 29).

Both groups of students appear to be highly concerned with their classroom experiences of learning in English. While they share similar experiences in eleven instances (items 3, 4, 6, 12, 13, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27 and 29), they also had two instances in which they differed. The coastal provincial group differed from inland provincial group in items 8 and 24 and 4 and 29 respectively.

The comparison of means and standard deviations for all students and the coastal/inland groups (Table 2) shows us that the two groups experience language anxiety. The discussion, however, so far has showed only the particular ways in which these two groups demonstrated a tendency in terms of their perceptions of anxiety. In order to find out if any of the similarities and differences was statistically significant between the two groups on the specific items of the FLCAS, nonparametric statistical procedures using Mann-Whitney U test, were performed. The results are reported in Table 3. The results show that with an alpha level of .05, the distributions of both groups differed on ten items. On average, both groups of students reported higher levels of anxiety on an equal number of items. The inland group of students showed higher levels of anxiety for FLCAS items 2, 14, 17, 27 and 29 while the remaining five items were indicative of the higher anxiety levels for the coastal groups. The inland group of students was worried about making mistakes when using English in class. They were not nervous with people who spoke only in English. They often felt like not going to their English based classes. They got nervous and confused when they spoke in class and were highly nervous when they did not understand every word said by the English based class teacher. Of the five variables, three of the FLCAS items (2, 27 and 29) show that the inland provincial group of students is highly concerned about their class experiences. The coastal provincial group of students, on the other hand, showed lesser anxiety on these experiences. The coastal provincial group of students show less anxiety in many of the classroom related experiences. They feel confident when speaking in English classes (FLCAS item 18). Even though they feel very self-conscious about speaking in front of other students, they are less nervous than inland provincial students when they speak in classes. They are also very relaxed about going to English classes (item 28) and are not nervous in not being able to understand every word spoken by the teacher in English classes (item 29) are not exposed to wider experiences of educational experiences.

Table 3
Group Differences in the Perception of Anxiety

Items	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS Items)	Mean Rank		Mann-Whitney U	t – test for equality of mean	Standard Mean Differences
		Inland	Coastal			
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak in English.	48.47	55.77	1038.5	-1.18	.066
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in using English in class.	61.74	49.77	932.5	-1.97	.059
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over English based class.	47.38	56.27	1002.5	-1.46	.033
14	I am not nervous with people who speak in English only.	57.80	51.55	1062.5	-1.03	.067
17	I often feel like not going to my English based class only.	58.73	51.14	1032.0	-1.24	.087
18	I feel confident when I speak in my English based class.	45.15	56.60	929.0	-1.89	.076
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	46.09	56.85	960.0	-1.76	.038
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English based class.	57.92	51.50	1058.5	-1.05	.047
28	When I'm on my way to English based class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	46.62	56.61	977.5	-1.64	.025
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English based class teacher says.	64.86	48.36	829.5	-2.70	.066

Conclusion

The study began with three research questions to observe the experiences of PRC students studying at APU in their undergraduate curriculum. The students were classified as originating from coastal and or inland provinces in China. The paper has

examined how students from the developed versus the less developed areas differ in their experiences of learning English. The first section of the paper presented the background to the spread of PRC students in many developed countries and the theoretical foundations. The second section of the paper reported related studies and the methodology used in collecting and analyzing the data. The FLCAS instrument was used to account for the English language learning experiences of the PRC students in Japan. The analysis and findings of the paper were described in the third section of the paper.

A number of findings emerged with reference to the research question as the PRC students learnt in English in Japan. A total of 14 FLCAS items emerged as instances which made all students experience anxiety while learning English. The pattern observed for all students, when compared across the two regional groups were consistent except for the apprehension felt by students as to 'why some people get so upset over English based classes' (FLCAS item 11) was not significant among students from inland provinces. For both regional groups newer sources of anxiety in English language learning emerged.

The coastal or inland provincial origins of students showed selective impact on the students. Even though they shared similar pattern of effects, those from coastal areas had more classroom experiences than the inland group. The shared and differentiated learning experiences amongst the two groups could be described as classroom based and anticipatory experiences.

Two important findings emerged from the observations in this paper. Firstly, all students experienced language anxiety in language learning owing to the change in their learning environment. The coastal group of students, originating from the competitive environment of China's coastal provinces had stronger feelings of language learning anxiety than their inland counterparts.

There are several limitations to the findings reported in this paper. First, the findings may not be generalisable except for application to contexts having similar features. It may be that the groups of students in this study are highly self-selective and have made clear choices owing to long-term goals of their lives. Secondly, associations between student's learning experiences and their learning achievement are not evident in this study, as no examination scores either in China or Japan were collected.

Several implications for pedagogy might be suggested as arising from the findings. Firstly, Japan destined students need to be clearly oriented at the beginning of their programs. The explicit orientation would reduce the unnecessary anxieties that could arise because of their unfamiliarity with the learning environment and the learning

contexts. Secondly, encouraging students to adapt to the way of life in Japan to get along with non-PRC students would help brush up their English and understand the various cultures from which students come to learn English. This in turn will help lower their anxieties while learning (in) English. In Japan, there is the possibility of students using more Mandarin owing to their close-knit friendship with other Chinese or using Japanese owing to the larger societal context. Thirdly, introducing teachers of different nationalities involving closer teacher-student contact can also be helpful. For most PRC students, their experience with teachers of different ethnicities and nationalities would have been limited except in those schools in China that employ some Caucasians as ‘native speakers’ of English. Teachers of Malay, Indian, Japanese, Filipino, African and non-PRC Chinese (who do not speak Mandarin) origins would be a cultural shock to first-time PRC Chinese in Japan. It will be sometime before the PRC students realize that English is used predominantly by non-Caucasian looking people than Americans and British.

If PRC students studying English as a foreign language in China are faced with language learning anxieties, then the severity of the problems faced by them in Japan would be even greater. This paper has considered some aspects of the challenges faced by them so that we may consider the factors that might provide help in facilitating them in acquiring proficiency in English.

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