

Exploring students' foreign language anxiety, intercultural sensitivity, and perceptions of teacher effectiveness

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Abstract

This two-tiered study investigated 154 students to determine the relationships among their ratings of anxiety, intercultural sensitivity, and perceptions of their teachers' ability to effectively teach the Spanish language. The results suggested that as students' levels of FL anxiety increased, students' ratings of intercultural sensitivity decreased, and students were more likely to give a lower rating to their FL teachers' ability to teach effectively. Analyses found students completing classes with native-Spanish speaking teachers did not have higher levels of anxiety when compared to students in classes with native-English speaking teachers, but they did perceive their teachers as being less effective. Additionally, students in more advanced classes perceived their teachers as communicating less clearly, in general teaching less effectively, and being less willing to provide help.

Key words: Corrective feedback, learner uptake and repair, learners' preferences of corrective feedback, Chinese language teaching and learning

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1. Introduction

Many students today are required to complete foreign language (FL) courses in order to meet their undergraduate educational requirements. Universities/colleges require students to complete FL coursework due to the numerous benefits associated with learning another language. Specifically, researchers have found that FL proficiency can enhance individuals' cognitive and academic abilities and may help them gain employment in a wider array of workforce settings (Bialystok, 2009; Caldas & Boudreaux, 1999; Kempert, Saalbach, & Hardy, 2011; Marcos & Peyton, 2000).

Although the intent for the language requirement may be for students' benefit, many students grudgingly complete these classes to obtain a desired degree and therefore, may delay enrolling until the end of their college career (Philips, 1992). This may create anxiety due to students' need to pass the FL class

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on the first try if they are to graduate on time. Additionally, students may experience FL anxiety for other reasons such as worrying about their ability to comprehend the target language or to correctly speak the FL in class. Students may also experience anxiety due to fear of embarrassing reprimands by their FL teacher (Phillips, 1991). Indeed, students who have never previously experienced anxiety in relation to their academic studies may feel apprehension toward their FL class (Hewitt & Stephson, 2011; Horwitz, 2010; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

In addition to experiencing anxiety due to pressures related to performance issues, another reason that students may experience FL anxiety is their perceptions of their instructor. Because many FL classes are taught by native speakers of the FL (i.e., non-native English speaking), differences between students' and teachers' native languages and culture can play a factor in activating students' levels of FL anxiety (Ando, 1999; Ebsworth & Eisenstein, 1997; Yashima, 2002). When students have difficulty understanding their instructors' speech and behaviors, they may experience anxiety about learning the FL language. Little is known about this aspect of students' FL learning.

The study reported here explored different factors that may impact students' FL anxiety while learning Spanish, particularly possible influences of the instructors' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This study investigated the extent to which students' feelings of FL anxiety may be related to their levels of intercultural sensitivity (an individual's understanding of the cultural differences and viewpoints of people from diverse cultures) when their classes are taught by native-Spanish speaking, compared to non-native Spanish speaking, teachers—particularly if students are taking different levels of FL coursework. Supporting our research, the following literature review describes theory and research regarding (1) students' FL anxiety, (2) students' perceptions of non-native English speaking teachers (i.e., intercultural sensitivity), and (3) ways that advanced knowledge and skills (i.e., more in-depth understanding of the Spanish language due to completion of higher levels of Spanish coursework) may mediate students' perceptions of non-native English speakers as well as their feelings of FL anxiety.

1.1. FL Anxiety

Anxiety is defined as a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry that is associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Often, anxiety occurs when an individual is apprehensive only in a particular situation and not in other circumstances. As such, researchers have characterized FL anxiety as a specific anxiety reaction that occurs in situations in which an individual is learning or using the FL (Abu-Rabia, 2004; Horwitz, et. al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Although students may experience anxiety related to all coursework, Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley (1997) suggested that FL classes are more anxiety-provoking than other classes within students' programs of study. Indeed, researchers have found that nearly one-half of all college students who are completing FL coursework have experienced high levels of anxiety when learning a FL (Campbell & Ortiz 1991; MacIntyre, 1995).

There are a multitude of sources that can impact students' feelings of FL anxiety. For example, FL anxiety may be a result of the instructor's teaching methods (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009; Price, 1991), students' learning style preferences (Reid, 1995), and/or performance anxieties (Horwitz, et. al, 1986). Similar to feelings of anxiety that could occur in all situations, individuals who experience FL anxiety may display a range of symptoms, including apprehension, worry, dread, sweating, and palpitations (Horwitz et. al., 1986). FL students may show additional signs, such as forgetfulness, not interacting with others, and avoidance of speaking aloud in their FL class (Han, 2006). According to Phillips (1991), students who experience FL anxiety tend to sit in the back of the classroom in an attempt to "hide" in their seats, hoping

the professor will not call on them. They also tend to skip class often and they fail to complete their homework assignments. Perhaps most importantly, Philips (1991) found that students understand that FL anxiety affects their learning; many students perceived that their low FL exam scores and grades were a consequence of their FL anxiety.

Researchers further suggest that students who experience high levels of anxiety may have difficulty acquiring a FL (Gregersen, 2003; Horwitz, et. al, 1986; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009). As such, FL anxiety has been found to be negatively associated with language achievement (Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz, 2010; Horwitz, et. al, 1986). Lim (2009) suggested that individuals who experience negative high levels of anxiety toward the language learning process are more likely to discontinue their FL studies.

Experiencing FL anxiety can also affect students' achievement in their other-required college courses outside of their FL studies. For example, Phillips (1992) found students reported they needed to spend more time studying for their FL class and therefore were not able to put as much time and effort into their other studies. Even students who normally achieve high grades may find themselves expending large amounts of time and effort in acquiring second language skills (Price, 1991). As normally-competent students fail to perform at their expected levels of achievement, they may doubt their overall academic abilities (Phillips, 1992).

1.1.1. Instructors' impact on FL anxiety.

In FL contexts, the role of the instructor may be vital in reducing or heightening students' levels of anxiety (Ando, 1999; Liu, Sellnow, & Venette, 2006). For example, prior research suggests that FL instructors who provide a supportive role in students' learning outcomes are more likely to create positive language learning settings, which helps to reduce students' high levels of anxiety (Ewald, 2007; Horwitz, 2000). On the other hand, instructors who act callously (Aida, 1994) and judgmentally (Samimy & Rardin, 1994) trigger students' FL anxiety. When FL teachers correct students frequently with critical, disapproving vocalizations, students may experience FL anxiety (Young, 1991).

One theory regarding the occurrence of FL anxiety proposes that students experience high levels of second language learning anxiety due to fear of interacting with individuals who are culturally different from themselves (Yashima, 2002). In particular, students may experience higher levels of anxiety when they are required to interact in situations in which they do not know or understand the cultural behaviors of their counterpart. This is particularly relevant when students must interact with a teacher who is a native speaker of the FL they are studying and who, therefore, is non-native to their culture. The diverse cultural differences between students and instructors in FL settings may negatively impact students' learning because of the anxiety engendered (Ando, 1999; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001).

1.1.2. Students' Perceptions of Non-Native English Speaking Teachers

McCroskey (2002) theorized that aspects of communication, such as students' communication apprehension (associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person ; see also McCroskey, 1976), their general motivation (the desires or the will that directs students toward a desired goal), and/or their ethnocentrism (preferences for those whose personal views are aligned with their own culture and worldview) can contribute to students' negative perceptions of non-native English-speaking L2 teachers' effectiveness. For example, Ando (1999) found that L2 students experience more anxiety when completing courses with teachers who are native speakers of the target language. Ando (1999) suggested

that his findings could include students' perceptions of the teacher lacking sensitivity to the FL learning process and students' inability to comprehend their teacher when he/she speaks in the English language. As discussed in the next section, teachers' nonverbal behaviors have also been found to be strong predictors of ways that students perceive both native and non-native English speaking teachers (Liu, Sellnow, & Venette, 2006).

1.1.3. *Immediacy Behaviors: Perceived Psychology Distance*

Behaviors among individuals of dissimilar cultures can be displayed in different forms. *Immediacy behaviors* are one type of behavioral difference that is found to be important in classrooms. Robinson (1995) defined immediacy behaviors as "the perceived physical or psychological distance between people in a relationship" (p. 4). These types of perceived teacher behaviors can be important in an educational setting because they affect the extent to which a student perceives a teacher as being approachable or non-approachable. Immediacy behaviors are divided into verbal and non-verbal categories. Teachers' verbal immediacy behaviors include giving praise, soliciting viewpoints, and using humor (Swan, 2002). Non-verbal immediacy behaviors are characterized by teachers' behaviors that include physical proximity, touch, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures (Swan, 2002). Robinson (1995) suggested that relationships exist among teachers' immediacy behaviors and students' learning such that teachers' immediacy behaviors have a significant positive impact on students' levels of satisfaction during the learning process.

Students' perceptions of their teachers' immediacy behaviors may affect their levels of intercultural sensitivity and may also be related to their experiences of FL anxiety. One important outcome of students' perceptions of their teachers' immediacy behaviors may be the extent to which they attend to, and understand, their teachers. For example, teachers' communicative messages could influence how students interpret and understand the information that is presented in class (Norton, 1978). Miscommunications may be particularly problematic in FL classrooms that often contain teachers of diverse cultural backgrounds.

1.1.4. *Students' Intercultural Sensitivity*

FL classrooms often consist of teachers of many different nationalities. Throughout the years, university and college campuses have become more diverse (McCroskey, 1998). These changes result in many teachers and students having diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This may result in students encountering a teacher of a different nationality in which they are unfamiliar with the cultural behaviors. Ebsworth and Eisenstein (1997) contended that, in this type of situation, students may be unsure about the behaviors that a teacher may consider to be "good manners" or "rude" (p. 195). Students may also not accurately interpret their teacher's behaviors. As a result, students may prematurely cast negative interpretations and judgments on their teachers' actions and reactions. Previous experiences with specific cultural groups may influence a student's reaction when he/she is required to engage with a non-native English speaker. Schaller (1991) found that individuals favored others whom they considered to be in their *ingroup* (social group in which individuals share loyalty and respect) rather than individuals who are included in their *outgroup* (social group for which they do not belong and may feel animosity towards). This tendency may result in some students having illusory perceptions that may cause them to over-generalize negative aspects of teachers who are not part of their ingroup, such as when teachers have accented speech.

Because students may see their teacher as being in an outgroup, they may perceive their teachers as being unable to adequately and effectively teach the course content.

Even when a similar language is spoken in various countries, displays of an individual's cultural identity may evoke ingroup/outgroup perceptions of cultural styles and norms (McCroskey, 1998). These cultural styles and norms define the standards of teaching effectiveness and may trigger misunderstandings or disagreements when cultural differences are encountered (Hect, Larkey, & Johnson, 1992). When individuals have different expectations of behaviors that are considered to be "normal," these differences may lead to concern, confusion, or even anger. In a classroom, misperceptions of behavioral expectations can have detrimental effects on students' learning if they experience anxiety related to communicating with their teacher.

With respect to cultural sensitivity, previous research has investigated the extent to which students may have preconceived perceptions of their international, compared to their non-international, instructors' teaching abilities. For example, Rubin and Smith (1990) found that the students' perceptions of their teachers' abilities were significantly different for teachers whose ethnicity was different than their own. Sebastian and Ryan (1985) found that students specifically tended to negatively evaluate speakers who had an accented speech. Similarly, Thomas (1999) found that American students often considered their teachers as being less credible and competent when their teachers were native speakers of various international varieties of English (i.e., British English and South Asian English). Thomas suggested students' perceptions about their own abilities to negotiate meaning with non-native English speaking teachers may influence their perceptions of non-native teachers' teaching abilities.

Zoreda and Revilla (2003) contended that individuals *need* to develop tolerance and respect for other cultures. They proposed that this goal could be accomplished in FL classrooms by focusing the curriculum on activities that reflect cultural information because culture and communication are inseparable and culture is encompassed in every phase of communication processes. As such, throughout the course of a conversation, individuals may perceive others' actions and reactions positively or negatively based on their level of intercultural understanding. Therefore, students with higher levels of FL knowledge may have higher levels of intercultural sensitivity and consequently be less vulnerable to both negatively judging their international instructors and feeling FL anxiety.

1.1.5. Students' Domain Knowledge as Mediators of Students' Intercultural Sensitivity

Oppenheim (1996) found that highly motivated and well-prepared students who were in advanced calculus and computer science classes perceived international teaching assistants as being effective. Compared to less advanced students, not only did these advanced students provide higher ratings with respect to their own abilities to understand their non-native English-speaking teaching assistants, but they also indicated their non-native English-speaking teaching assistants were able to help them learn the material covered in class. However, less experienced students in lower-level classes viewed international teaching assistants as less effective.

Furthermore, Oppenheim's (1996) results showed that advanced students' actual achievement was not negatively affected by being in an intercultural environment. She suggested one reason for this finding was due to the advanced students' abilities to adapt to the non-native English speakers' communication due to their own prior knowledge in calculus and/or computer science. She further suggested that the increased knowledge that advanced students brought to learning contexts mediated their perceptions of their non-native English-speaking teaching assistants. For example, undergraduates who had limited experience with a particular subject area may have needed to expend additional cognitive efforts in order to

construct meaning of non-native English teacher-assistants' explanations. Therefore, having to expend significant effort both to understand non-native English teacher-assistant *and* to learn the content knowledge may activate or increase students' anxiety for learning the course content.

This phenomenon may also occur in FL courses; however, current research has not explored relationships of students' FL anxiety, their intercultural sensitivity towards native and non-native FL teachers, and a possible mediating effect of students' levels of FL prior knowledge. To fill this gap, the present study investigated these relationships. In particular, we were interested in exploring the extent to which students who took FL classes from non-native English-speaking teachers, experienced more FL anxiety, perceived their non-native English-speaking teachers as less effective, and had less intercultural sensitivity than students who took classes from teachers who were native-English speaking. Additionally, we were interested in exploring if students who were completing lower levels of FL courses experienced more FL anxiety, perceived their non-native English-speaking teachers as less effective, and had less intercultural sensitivity than students who were completing higher levels of FL courses.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

All participants in this study ($n=160$) were recruited from a large public university located in the southeast United States. Participants were either (1) taking lower first and second semester "comprehensive" Spanish courses ($n=67$), or (2) taking higher level third and fourth semester "intermediate" Spanish classes ($n=93$).

2.1.1. Courses and teachers

The majority of undergraduate programs at the university at which this study took place require students to complete, at minimum, an intermediate level FL course to graduate. Students who completed high school Spanish FL courses are eligible to register for either a Comprehensive Spanish course (provides an overview of content learned in their two years of FL study for all four language skills—i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing) or an Intermediate Spanish course (provides overview of prior content learned and encompasses a literature component). Once students complete the Comprehensive Spanish course successfully, they enroll in the Intermediate Spanish course to fulfill their FL requirement.

Students in four classes from each course level (comprehensive and intermediate) participated in this study (a total of eight Spanish classes). Each course level included a native-English speaking instructor and a native-Spanish speaking instructor. Specifically, each instructor taught two sections of a course in each level (i.e., one native-English instructor taught two classes of comprehensive Spanish, one native-Spanish instructor taught two classes of comprehensive Spanish, one native-English instructor taught two classes of intermediate Spanish, one native-Spanish instructor taught two classes of intermediate Spanish).

Although the instructors spoke in the Spanish language for the majority of all course sections, English was used to clarify and reinforce content. All instructors were required to use mandated, structured curriculum to ensure that students received similar content across different sections of the same course. All non-native Spanish-speaking instructors had completed extensive Spanish language training, had been teaching Spanish at the university level for at least two years, and were students pursuing graduate degrees in the Modern Language Department. As Table 1 shows, 52% of the participants had a native-Spanish speaking instructor and 48% were completing a Spanish class with a native-English speaking instructor.

Table 1: Course Level and Teachers' Native Language by Number of Research Participants

Course Level	Native-English Speaking Teachers (<i>n</i> =2)	Native-Spanish Speaking Teachers (<i>n</i> =2)	Total
Comprehensive Spanish	32	35	67 (42%)
Intermediate Spanish	45	48	93 (58%)
TOTAL	77 (48%)	83 (52%)	160 (100%)

2.2. Procedures

Near the completion of the semester, students were given a survey packet to complete at the beginning of their normally scheduled Spanish class. The packet included a questionnaire regarding the students' demographic background and three surveys assessing: students' FL anxiety, students' perceptions of their FL teachers' effectiveness, and students' intercultural communication sensitivity.

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Demographic information

The first page of the survey packet gathered demographic information on students' race/ethnicity, major of study (FL major or non-FL major), and the level of Spanish course they were currently completing.

2.3.2. FL anxiety

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz, et al. (1986) was used to assess students' levels of FL anxiety. This survey consisted of 33 items and reflected students' experiences of communication apprehension (e.g., "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my foreign language class"), test anxiety (e.g., "I am usually at ease during tests in my Spanish class," reversed-scored), and fear of negative evaluation in the FL classroom (e.g., "I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language I am learning"). Students were requested to rate each survey item based on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). In this study, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .93 was obtained.

2.3.3. Student perceptions of instructors' effectiveness

The Student Perceptions of FL Teachers' Effectiveness survey was used to assess students' perceptions of the communication abilities of their FL teachers, particularly their abilities to communicate assignments and concepts clearly. The 16 items used in this study were modified from Oppenheim's (1996) Undergraduate Questionnaire, which was developed to compare students' perceptions of native English-speaking teaching-assistants' effectiveness and students' perceptions of international teaching-assistants' effectiveness. Only items that directly related to our particular study were used.

Items included in this survey assessed the extent to which students perceived their teachers as being effective and students' ability to comprehend their native-Spanish speaking teachers. The wording of the

survey items were modified to better reflect the focus on students' perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness instead of teaching-assistants, which was the focus of Oppenheim's (1996) study. The revised scale consisted of three subscales that assessed FL students' perceptions of their teachers' ability to communicate clearly (e.g., "My foreign language teacher explains concepts clearly"), their teachers' general teaching effectiveness (e.g., "My foreign language teacher is an effective teacher"), and their perceptions of teachers' willingness to help them (e.g., "My foreign language teacher does not care about helping students," reverse-scored). Students were asked to rate each survey item based on a 5-point Likert scale regarding how true the item was for them (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The alpha coefficients obtained in this study included *ability to communicate clearly*, $\alpha = .90$; *teacher effectiveness*, $\alpha = .92$; and *willingness to provide help*, $\alpha = .90$.

2.3.4. Intercultural sensitivity

To assess students' cultural understanding, Chen and Starosta's (2000) Intercultural Sensitivity Measure was used. This survey contains 36 items and assesses individuals' perceptions of communicating with culturally diverse others (e.g., "I feel shy being with people from other cultures," "I respect the ways people from different cultures behave," and "I act naturally in a culturally different group"). Students rated all survey items on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). In this study, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .86 was obtained for the intercultural sensitivity items.

3. Results

3.1. Relationships Among Students' FL Anxiety, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Teachers' Effectiveness

As a preliminary analysis, ranges, means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients were calculated. Correlations were used to investigate relationships among students' ratings of their FL anxiety, intercultural sensitivity, and perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness (i.e., ability to communicate clearly, general teaching effectiveness, and willingness to provide help).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for FL Anxiety, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Teaching Effectiveness Variables

Variable	Range	M	SD
FL Anxiety			
Communication Apprehension	1.00-5.00	2.6	.96
Test Anxiety	1.00-5.00	2.9	1.2
Fear of Negative Evaluation	1.00-5.00	2.9	1.2
Intercultural Sensitivity	2.83-4.39	3.6	.3
Teaching Effectiveness			

FL Teachers' Ability to Communicate Clearly	1.60-5.00	4.0	.76
FL Teacher Effectiveness	1.20-5.00	4.1	.65
FL Teachers' Willingness to Provide Help	1.80-5.99	4.2	.77

Table 3: Correlations of FL Anxiety, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Teaching Effectiveness

	FL Anxiety	Intercultural Sensitivity	Ability to Communicate Clearly	Teacher Effectiveness
FL Anxiety	—			
Intercultural Sensitivity	-.28**	—		
FL Teachers' Ability to Communicate Clearly	-.37**	.11	—	
FL Teacher Effectiveness	-.30**	.03	.89**	—
FL Teachers' Willingness to Provide Help	-.29**	.06	.81**	.87**

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As displayed in Table 3, results showed that students' ratings of FL anxiety were significantly and negatively correlated with their ratings of intercultural sensitivity ($r = -.28, p < .01$) and their ratings of their teachers' effectiveness (ability to communicate clearly, $r = -.37, p < .01$; general teaching effectiveness, $r = -.30, p < .01$; and willingness to provide help, $r = -.29, p < .01$). Additionally, significant positive correlations were shown among the students' ratings of their perceptions of teachers' effectiveness. However, no significant correlations were found between students' ratings on intercultural sensitivity and their perceptions of teachers' effectiveness.

3.2. Students' Ratings With Teachers of Different Native Languages

To explore possible differences of students' ratings on the dependent variables of FL anxiety, intercultural sensitivity, and perceptions of teachers' effectiveness, across the independent variable of teachers' native language, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The MANOVA results demonstrated significant differences ($\lambda = 4.29, p = .006$).

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Test Analysis by Teachers' Native Language

Variables	Teachers' Native Language		T-Value
	Spanish (n=80)	English (n=80)	
FL Anxiety	2.83 (.64)	2.70 (.63)	1.60
Intercultural Sensitivity	3.65 (.33)	3.60 (.33)	1.07
FL Teachers' Ability to Communicate Clearly	3.79 (.58)	4.28 (.84)	17.60***
FL Teacher Effectiveness	3.93 (.89)	4.35 (.60)	11.66***
FL Teachers' Willingness to Provide Help	4.08 (.70)	4.35 (.57)	6.93***

*** $p < .001$

As shown in Table 4, follow-up comparisons showed no significant differences for students' ratings between Spanish classes taught by native-Spanish teachers and native-English teachers with respect to FL anxiety and intercultural sensitivity. However, significant differences for students' ratings were found between Spanish classes taught by native-English teachers and those who had native-Spanish teachers with respect to students' perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness, $t(1, 158) = 9.78, p = .002$, effect size = .054. In particular, students completing Spanish courses with native-Spanish speaking teachers perceived their teachers as communicating less clearly, $t(1, 158) = 17.60, p < .001$, effect size = .819, having lower levels of general teaching effectiveness, $t(1, 158) = 11.66, p < .001$, effect size = .687, and perceived their teachers as less willing to provide help, $t(1, 158) = 6.93, p < .001$, effect size = .491.

3.3. Students' Ratings With Different Levels of Domain Knowledge

To explore possible differences of students' ratings on anxiety, intercultural sensitivity, and perceptions of teachers' effectiveness and their course levels (i.e., Comprehensive Spanish and Intermediate Spanish), a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The MANOVA demonstrated significant differences across course levels, ($\lambda = .79, p = .000$). T-tests were conducted to analyze the extent to which specific differences occurred across students' ratings between those taking comprehensive Spanish classes and those taking intermediate Spanish classes. As Table 5 shows, analyses found that participants who were completing comprehensive level classes did not have higher levels of FL anxiety than students who were completing intermediate level classes, $t(1, 158) = .30, ns$ nor did they have higher levels of intercultural sensitivity compared to students who were completing intermediate level classes, $t(1, 158) = .003, ns$. Both groups showed moderate levels of FL anxiety (comprehensive students $M = 2.73$; intermediate students $M = 2.79$) and moderate levels of intercultural sensitivity (comprehensive students $M = 3.62$; intermediate students $M = 3.62$).

Table 5: Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Test Analysis By Course Level

Variables	Course Level		T-Value
	Comprehensive (<i>n</i> =66)	Intermediate (<i>n</i> =88)	
FL Anxiety	2.73 (.64)	2.79 (.63)	.30
Intercultural Sensitivity	3.62 (.34)	3.62 (.33)	.003
FL Teachers' Ability to Communicate Clearly	4.44 (.52)	3.74 (.76)	42.23***
FL Teacher Effectiveness	4.54 (.45)	3.85 (.83)	35.28***
FL Teachers' Willingness to Provide Help	4.52 (.44)	4.00 (.69)	30.02***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Findings also revealed that students who were completing higher levels of Spanish classes perceived their FL teachers as being overall *less* effective than students' completing lower levels of Spanish classes. Students in comprehensive levels of Spanish classes perceived their FL teachers as having the ability to communicate more clearly, $t(1, 158) = 42.23$, $p < .001$, effect size = .960, to teach more effectively, $t(1, 158) = 35.28$, $p < .001$, effect size = .944, and to be more willing to provide help, $t(1, 158) = 30.02$, $p < .001$, effect size = .925.

3.4. Exploratory Analysis: Teacher Effects

Because participants in this study included students from four instructors' classes, we explored possible teacher effects. To investigate teacher effects, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with teachers as the independent variable (i.e., Teacher #1, Teacher #2, Teacher #3, and Teacher #4) and students' ratings of FL anxiety, intercultural sensitivity, and teacher effectiveness (i.e., ability to communicate clearly, general teaching effectiveness, and willingness to provide help) as the dependent variables. The MANOVA results revealed a significant difference ($\lambda = .714$, $p < .001$). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine specific differences in students' ratings of FL anxiety, intercultural sensitivity, and their perceptions of individual teachers' effectiveness (i.e., ability to communicate clearly, general teaching effectiveness, and willingness to provide help) across the four teachers (i.e., Teacher #1, Teacher #2, Teacher #3, and Teacher #4).

Table 6: Means, Standard Deviations, and F-Test Analysis By Teachers

Variables	Teacher #1 Native-Spanish	Teacher #2 Native-English	Teacher #3 Native-Spanish	Teacher #4 Native-English	F-value
FL Anxiety	2.66 (.66)	2.75 (.60)	2.91 (.59)	2.72 (.69)	1.24
Intercultural Sensitivity	3.60 (.32)	3.60 (.36)	3.64 (.34)	3.65 (.33)	.36
FL Teachers' Ability to Communicate Clearly	4.07 (.60) ^a	4.55 (.42) ^a	3.41 (.77) ^b	4.33 (.61) ^a	25.02***
FL Teacher Effectiveness	4.15 (.67) ^a	4.61 (.38) ^a	3.66 (.90) ^b	4.46 (.52) ^a	18.75***
FL Teachers' Willingness to Provide Help	4.18 (.62) ^a	4.57 (.42) ^a	3.81 (.70) ^b	4.47 (.08) ^a	13.66***

Note: variables within the same row that share the same subscript are not significantly different

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As Table 6 shows, results demonstrated statistically significant differences across the four instructors for students' ratings of teachers' effectiveness (ability to communicate clearly, $F(1, 4) = 25.02$, $p < .001$, effect size = .997; general teaching effectiveness, $F(1, 4) = 18.75$, $p < .001$, effect size = .994; and willingness to provide help, $F(1, 4) = 13.66$, $p < .001$, effect size = .989), but not for students' ratings of FL anxiety and intercultural sensitivity. Post hoc comparisons (using Scheffe correction for Type 1 error) revealed that teacher #3, who was a native-Spanish speaker, received significantly lower ratings than the other three teachers ($p < .001$, effect size = .994). Specifically, significant differences were found for ratings of ability to communicate clearly between teacher #3 and the other three teachers: teacher #1 ($MD = -.58$, $p < .05$), teacher #2 ($MD = -.87$, $p < .05$), and teacher #4 ($MD = -1.01$, $p < .05$). Significant differences were also found for ratings of general teaching effectiveness between teacher #3 and the other teachers: teacher #1 ($MD = -.53$, $p < .05$), teacher #2 ($MD = -.87$, $p < .05$), and teacher #4 ($MD = -1.02$, $p < .05$). Finally, significant differences were found for willingness to provide help between teacher #3 and the other teachers: teacher #1 ($MD = -.29$, $p < .05$), teacher #2 ($MD = -.61$, $p < .05$), and teacher #4 ($MD = -.71$, $p < .05$).

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore relationships among students' ratings of FL anxiety, their perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness, and their intercultural sensitivity, with particular emphasis on exploring differences in students' ratings for those who took (1) their FL classes from native Spanish-speaking teachers and native English-speaking teacher and (2) lower levels and higher levels of Spanish coursework.

In general, correlational analyses found that students who had higher levels of FL anxiety also tended to have lower ratings for intercultural sensitivity. Additionally, analyses showed that students who had

higher levels of FL anxiety tended to give lower ratings for their FL teachers' ability to effectively teach the Spanish language. Within the context of learning a foreign language, these findings were consistent with previous research that found relationships among teachers' immediacy behaviors (i.e., FL teachers being considered to be approachable or non-approachable) and factors that may impact students' learning, such as their levels of FL anxiety and their intercultural sensitivity (Liu, Sellnow, & Venette, 2006; Sebastian & Ryan, 1985; Thomas, 1999). Robinson (1995) suggested these relationships could have a significant impact on students' perceptions of the FL learning process and satisfaction toward the class. Students have also been found to experience FL anxiety when they anticipate the possibility that they may need to engage in conversation with culturally diverse others, which is often the case in FL classrooms (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997).

4.1. FL Anxiety and Course Level

Our analyses investigated students' anxiety relative to the level of Spanish courses they were completing. Contrary to our expectations, we found that students in lower levels of FL classes *did not* experience increased levels of anxiety nor did they provide lower levels of intercultural sensitivity compared to students in higher levels of FL classes. Also contrary to expectations, students in lower levels of FL classes perceived their FL teachers as being *more* effective. Oppenheim's (1996) study found that students who had non-native English speaking teaching-assistants in higher levels of classes experienced less anxiety than students who had non-native English speaking teaching assistants in lower levels of classes.

One possible reason for the inconsistency between our findings and Oppenheim's findings could be due to students in lower levels of Spanish classes having more experience in the content area. For example, students in our study had completed FL coursework as part of their high school academic studies. In addition to having at least a modicum of prior knowledge, students in introductory levels of FL learning may possess higher levels of FL *self-efficacy* (i.e., "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances," Bandura, 1997, p. 391). Self-efficacy involves the self-assessment of one's level of competence in regards to successfully completing a particular task. An individual's level of self-efficacy may impact his/her success or failure to achieve a particular outcome. Bandura (1997) argued that an individual's level of anxiety depends on his/her perceived self-efficacy beliefs. As a result, individuals with lower levels of self-efficacy perceive themselves as less able to accomplish a particular task and therefore experience higher levels of anxiety. Students with low FL self-efficacy may underestimate their L2 learning abilities and experience an increase in their feelings of insecurity and anxiety in regards to learning a target language. Even if an individual experiences FL anxiety, they can still perform well within their academic studies (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004). However, if a student has lower levels of self-efficacy and higher levels of anxiety, he/she may be less inclined to engage in tasks involving FL learning skills. Indeed, Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2007) found that the level of self-efficacy a student possesses in relation to his/her language learning abilities is a strong predictor of the degree of anxiety that he/she will experience in a FL classroom. Further research could investigate relationships among students' prior knowledge, self-efficacy, and anxiety within foreign language classes.

4.2. Comparison of Students Ratings of Native-English and Native-Spanish Teachers

A primary issue explored in this study was our comparisons of students' ratings with respect to those who were taking FL from native-English speaking teachers and native-Spanish speaking teachers with respect to possible student-differences (i.e., ratings of FL anxiety and intercultural sensitivity) and students' perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness. Our analysis found that students completing FL classes with native-Spanish speaking teachers *did not* have higher levels of FL anxiety, nor did they rate themselves lower in intercultural sensitivity when compared to students in classes with teachers who were native-English speakers. However, students did perceive their native-Spanish speaking teachers as being less effective.

There are several reasons why these results may have occurred. First, currently many universities are quite culturally diverse compared to campuses years ago and therefore, current students are provided more opportunities to become sensitive to different cultures (McCroskey, 1998). Their prior experiences with different cultures may have provided them with higher levels of intercultural sensitivity and this may influence students to experience less anxiety when they are in culturally diverse situations.

Although our results did not find differences for students' ratings of FL anxiety and intercultural sensitivity between courses with native-English speaking teachers and native-Spanish speaking teachers, differences were found for students' ratings of teachers' effectiveness. One possible explanation for these findings could be due to the additional cognitive load that was presented when students had to decipher one teacher's accented-speech. For example, although students were completing a Spanish FL class, the English language was spoken throughout the class often to explain specific instructions and activities. One researcher observed and took field notes in all classes. This researcher observed that English was used before, during, and after class for initial greetings, clarifications, and explanations of class expectations; however, the teacher who received lower ratings had an accented speech when speaking English, which could have impacted students' ratings. Our study supported similar results such as Rubin and Smith's (1990) results regarding students' perceptions of teaching-effectiveness among international and non-international instructors. Similar to our results, Rubin and Smith's (1990) study found that students perceived international teachers as being less effective. However, a caveat must be made. As the next section discusses, only one native-Spanish speaking instructor received significantly lower ratings than the other teachers.

4.3. Individual Teacher Effects

A possible explanation for the lower ratings of students' perceptions of their native-Spanish speaking teachers' abilities to effectively teach could be due to teacher-effects. Specifically, our analysis found that one native-Spanish speaking teacher, in particular, received significantly lower levels of ratings in comparison to the other three FL teachers, which included one Spanish-speaking teacher and two English-speaking teachers. Therefore, students may simply have perceived that one particular teacher was less able to teach effectively the Spanish language. As a result, this study cannot conclude that FL students' perceive native-Spanish speaking teachers as less effective. Heck (2009) suggested "the effects of teaching on learning are diverse and complex" (p. 229). Heck (2009) further contended that the impact of these effects depends on the learning context of the student. Because FL learning is often perceived as an anxiety-provoking process, teachers' interactional behaviors (i.e., immediacy behaviors) may have more of an impact on students' levels of FL anxiety as well as their perceptions of their teacher's ability to teach.

Further research is needed to identify teacher behaviors that help to reduce students' FL anxiety and those that increase students' FL anxiety.

5. Future Directions for Research

There were two primary limitations for our current research. These limitations included the lack of availability of FL courses in general and, in particular, the lack of availability of entry-levels courses to participate in the study. Students in only two different levels (comprehensive and intermediate) participated in our current research. In spite of our limitations, we believe our results were both interesting and support the need for additional research.

As stated in the introduction and literature review, investigating students' FL anxiety is important because completing a FL requirement is necessary for most students to graduate with a baccalaureate degree. Interestingly, our results showed a significant negative correlation between students' FL anxiety and their ratings of intercultural sensitivity as well as between students' FL anxiety and their perceptions of their FL teachers' ability to effectively teach. In this sense, our results supported predicted correlations. Although the correlations supported the idea that students who experience high levels of FL anxiety also have lower intercultural sensitivity, our follow-up comparisons of students' ratings in classes taught by native-Spanish and native-English teachers did not show significant differences. These results suggest that students' FL anxiety and intercultural sensitivity are student-level characteristics that are not necessarily influenced by whether or not their teachers are native-English speakers or native speakers of the foreign language. Additionally, the same pattern of results were found for students' ratings of FL anxiety and intercultural sensitivity with respect to students' ratings within different levels of Spanish classes; students did not show differences in their ratings of FL anxiety nor in their ratings of intercultural sensitivity.

Our correlational results suggest that students may experience various levels of FL anxiety and various levels of intercultural sensitivity regardless of their teachers' native language and regardless of their level of study. Further research is needed to understand the relationships of students' FL anxiety and their acceptance of other cultures. For example, when a student has a low level of intercultural sensitivity, does the insensitivity include all cultures or is the insensitivity culture-specific? Although the correlation between these variables was found to be significant, it suggests that only a rather small group of students may exhibit this relationship; FL anxiety as well as intercultural sensitivity may likely be more strongly related to other variables. Future research could examine what these variables are and what role they play in students' FL learning.

Future research could also investigate instructional techniques that students view as being effective in L2 learning environments. Additionally, future research could investigate students' perceptions of accented speech and teaching effectiveness. Our correlations suggest that as students perceive their FL teachers as teaching more effectively, they experience lower levels of FL anxiety. The ways in which teachers' communicate, offer help, and effectively teach could be researched more in-depth to provide a better understanding as to how these factors decrease students' anxiety levels and increase students' FL learning. Furthermore, future research can investigate how motivational constructs such as self-efficacy impact the level of FL anxiety that a student may experience. Students who possess lower levels of self-efficacy toward FL learning may experience higher levels of FL anxiety. Students' with high levels of FL anxiety coupled with low levels of FL self-efficacy may impact students' perceptions of their FL teachers' ability to effectively teach the target language. Therefore, it is particularly important to develop a better understanding of the factors that hinder the FL learning experience in order to promote a successful L2 learning opportunity for all students.

6. Implications for Teaching and Learning

Although many students today may understand the ever-increasing need to adequately acquire a FL, they often do not embrace the opportunities presented to learn one. Bailey et al. (2003) argued that a large number of students underachieve in language classrooms due to the high levels of anxiety they experience in conjunction with the language learning process. To reduce students' high levels of anxieties, teachers could express at the onset of the semester that many students' experience high levels of FL anxiety and share their own anxieties associated with the language learning process. Additionally, teachers could incorporate class discussions and seek input from students on possible anxiety reducing methods (Ewald, 2007). Horwitz (1999) suggested that students feel a sense of relief in knowing that they are not the only ones who experience high levels of FL anxiety. Creating a low anxiety atmosphere at the onset of the semester could help ease students' negative language learning experiences.

Another source of FL anxiety may stem from students' inability to comprehend their teacher's spoken interactions in the FL. Awan et al. (2010) suggested that FL teachers should try to provide more comprehensible input during their class discussions. To achieve this goal, Awan et al. (2010) recommended that FL teachers slow their rate of speech and incorporate the students' native language when learners appear to have difficulty understanding the FL. Teachers in FL contexts could also organize activities that are less stressful and as a result less anxiety producing. One way FL teachers could reduce anxiety is by incorporating creative ways to learn grammatical skills (Ewald, 2007). For example, FL teachers could incorporate games to create a fun, positive learning atmosphere. The use of these types of activities could assess students' levels of FL proficiency in a nonthreatening way. Specifically, the use of games or other fun activities could encourage students who are typically more reluctant to participate because they do not want personal focus placed on them (e.g., social comparison in oral speeches). Essentially, FL students need to experience positive language learning experiences and understand the necessity of FL requirements.

As the world is becoming more culturally diverse, it is important for individuals to learn how to interact in a multicultural environment. Therefore, a need remains for researchers to continue studying effective FL teaching practices not only to help create low-anxiety learning environments, but to also help students become aware of cultural differences that they may encounter outside of the classroom.

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