6 Social Anxiety and Silence in Japan's Tertiary Foreign Language Classrooms

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Introduction

This chapter considers the intriguing relationship that exists between social anxiety and the silences of second language (L2) learners within a Japanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom context. Although in recent years, extensive attention has been focused on the impact anxiety has on L2 oral performance (e.g. Liu & Jackson, 2008; Woodrow, 2006), to date little consideration has been given to this issue when placing silence itself at the heart of the investigation. Rather than signifying a meaningless blank occurring during the course of a lesson, the reality of L2 classroom silence is that it has various forms and functions and emerges through complex multiple and concurrent routes (King, 2013a, 2013b). Within the Japanese context, some of the most salient of these routes connect to psychological and emotional factors that see a complex interplay of learner-internal and environmental issues interacting to support the silent behaviour of socially inhibited students.

In line with the American Psychiatric Association (2000), we define social anxiety as being a marked or persistent fear of social interactions in which one can be observed by others. Sufferers tend to have a negatively skewed self-concept and this plays into fears that their social performance will lead to embarrassment and humiliation. It is important to note from the outset that we do not consider social anxiety to be an entirely separate phenomenon to foreign language anxiety (FLA); rather it represents a deep seam running through the latter construct. In light of this, and in order to provide the most comprehensive overview of anxiety-related research conducted within Japan-related language learning contexts, our review of the literature examines anxiety in relation to the four language skills. This approach, which acknowledges that such skills do not operate in isolation of each other, enables us to provide an extensive and richly contextualised account of anxiety research through which to view the focal study of the chapter. We then go on to outline this study, conducted by the lead author

(King, 2014), which employed Clark and Wells' (1995) seminal model of social anxiety to better understand the silences produced by learners displaying an acute hypersensitivity to peers and a dread of negative evaluation within the public arena of the language classroom. The chapter concludes by offering some suggestions on how to reduce social anxiety levels within L2 classrooms and help educators comprehend and deal with silent episodes when they emerge.

An In-Depth Review of Anxiety Research in Japanese-Related L2 Contexts

To date, and in contrast to the dearth of empirical studies on the social anxiety of learners, a great deal of research has examined FLA within Japanese contexts, commonly finding that it hinders students performatively and psychologically and is often linked to poorer grades, lower self-confidence and negative attitudes towards the target language (see e.g. Aida, 1994; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). In order to provide a comprehensive overview of anxiety-related L2 research in Japan, our review of the literature is structured primarily around the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. This is in line with the assertion that a skills-based approach is a useful way of conceiving anxiety in foreign language learning because each skill bears related – but distinct – anxiety factors and should therefore be examined within its own specific context (Piniel, 2014).

Reading anxiety

Of the four main skill areas, reading might seem to cause the least anxiety for students of a foreign language. Reading is often a private activity, requiring one person rather than two or more to form meaning (Saito *et al.*, 1999), and it cannot be easily evaluated by outward means. However, Saito *et al.* (1999) propose two aspects of reading that have the potential to cause anxiety: unfamiliar orthography and unfamiliar cultural context. Foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA) arises from the inability to create a 'sound-symbol' correspondence with an unfamiliar writing system (Saito *et al.*, 1999: 203) or the inability to fully grasp the contextual meaning of a translation despite knowledge of a text's individual words. In a study of native English speakers learning a foreign language, Saito *et al.* (1999) found that while general language anxiety existed across all three languages present in their study (Japanese, French and Russian), reading anxiety was dependent on the target language and, more specifically, the orthographic system. Levels of reading anxiety increased according to the perceived difficulty of reading in the target language, where students of Japanese had the highest anxiety levels, followed by French and, finally, Russian. Similarly, differences between the English and Japanese writing

systems can cause anxiety for Japanese students learning English. Matsuda and Gobel (2001) became curious about FLRA when students spoke of apprehension towards reading English. Often, their anxiety led to trouble focusing on the text, even to the extent of rereading the same phrase multiple times without comprehension. In this case, while anxiety can stem from a lack of proper knowledge, a gap in cultural knowledge might leave students nervous that, even with grammatical and lexical knowledge, they will never reach a proficient status in the target language. Unlike Saito *et al*. (1999), Matsuda and Gobel (2001) found no significant correlation between the FLA and FLRA scales, which shows that FLRA may occur independently of general FLA. Self-confidence, or the general belief in one's ability to successfully and effectively communicate in the target language (MacIntyre *et al*., 1998), was the only significant component found in both. Here, low self-confidence correlated with higher levels of anxiety. Interestingly, unfamiliarity with English only caused significant results for first-year students, in line with Saito *et al*.'s (1999) notion that beginners tend to focus on the unknown minutiae of the target language instead of the broader contextual narrative.

In a similar study in 2004, Matsuda and Gobel investigated general FLA and FLRA in relation to gender, classroom performance and first-hand experience in the target culture. Gender had no substantial effect on general and reading anxiety but was a strong predictor of performance in first-year students, with female students tending to perform better than males. However, Kitano's (2001) study of speaking anxiety in American learners of Japanese found relevant gender differences: male students felt more anxiety when they were less confident about speaking, but this was not the case for female students. Overall, studies linking FLA and gender have produced varying results (Kimura, 2008; MacIntyre *et al*., 2002), suggesting that gender can be, but is not always, one of the several mitigating factors in FLA. In both Matsuda and Gobel's (2001, 2004) studies, low self-confidence was found to be an important factor in both FLA and FLRA. LeBlanc (2015) points to reading circles as a way for Japanese learners of English to increase self-efficacy (i.e. positive perceptions about one's ability to perform), which can decrease reading anxiety overall. In group discussions of texts, students were able to understand difficult constructions by checking evaluations with other students and by watching colleagues perform the task successfully. One student even directly reported that she 'understood better because there were various opinions and the story could be seen from different angles' (LeBlanc, 2015: 18).

Listening anxiety

Foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA) stems from an overload of information in which students are unable to control the speed or delivery of input, potentially resulting in embarrassing misunderstandings (Kimura,

2008). This apprehension manifests in less effective information processing, compromised information retrieval and lowered concentration in students studying a foreign language (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Kimura, 2008; Vogley, 1998). Within a Japanese EFL context, research on listening apprehension as distinct from FLA remains scant, perhaps because, like reading, listening is a receptive skill not directly assessed by teachers or students. Thus, Kimura (2008) draws from Kim's (2000) doctoral dissertation on EFL classes in South Korea, adapting her Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) for her own EFL students in Japan. Using factor analysis, Kimura proposed three subcomponents related to FLLA: emotionality, worry and anticipatory fear. She analysed university major and gender as independent variables to assess the subcomponents' distribution across groups. Her study consisted of 309 males and 143 females, all of whom were either social science or maths majors. Interestingly, the maths students were significantly different in terms of emotionality or emotional reactions to listening in English, displaying not only a lack of self-confidence but also other negative emotions such as intimidation, annoyance and discomfort. Kimura (2008) is only able to hypothesise as to the reasons for these reactions and suggests that there may be a link to the distinct learning orientation of these students. Similarly, in a descriptive study of affective variables on Japanese EFL students, Tani-Fukuchi (2005) found that only a small number of students described their English classes with positive emotions such as *enjoyment* or *happiness*, and over one-third of students reported no positive experiences at all in learning English. In Kimura's (2008: 183) study, maths and social science students did not differ in their 'cognitive perception[s] of anxiety' related to either anxiety-provoking situations or apprehension of negative consequences in these situations. Interestingly, she found that *anticipatory fear*, the factor providing the highest loadings in the data for both student groups, had not previously been discussed in similar studies of language anxiety. Since evaluation of listening skills necessarily occurs after listening has taken place, students with FLLA might interpret their fear of negative evaluation as anticipation about future events. She concludes that FLLA is a separate but related phenomenon to FLA, to which certain learner groups can be predisposed. Elkhafaifi's (2005) study of Arabic EFL learners similarly finds FLLA to be an independent but related construct of FLA, which negatively correlates with listening comprehension and final test grades. He also found intriguing group differences, namely that second-year students had the highest levels of listening anxiety. Saito and Samimy (1996) presented similar findings in their study of performance and FLA in American learners of Japanese, namely that anxiety was a higher predictor of performance in second- and third-year students than in first-year learners.

Yamauchi (2014) examined the use of challenging materials in mitigating listening anxiety in 25 low-proficiency learners of English. Students' listening anxiety stemmed from their perceived difficulty of the

course materials. Perceptions of material and language difficulty can play powerful roles in FLA, affecting confidence in the ability to adequately perform in the target language (MacInytre *et al.*, 1998; Saito *et al.*, 1999). Results from the questionnaire study showed that after a 15-week course using the challenging materials, FLLA significantly decreased and students began to use top-down processes when listening, starting with general ideas about the materials and growing more specific. Her findings suggest that pre-emptively introducing students to difficult materials may mitigate listening anxiety.

Writing anxiety

Research in foreign language writing anxiety (FLWA) borrows greatly from L1 writing apprehension studies. In fact, relatively little research into writing apprehension in L2 contexts has been undertaken. Anxiety in writing can result in students choosing majors that require less writing and have low expectations in writing performance (Daly & Miller, 1975). Cornwell and McKay (1998, 2000) contribute to the scant literature in this area by providing us with two interesting studies into the factors involved in foreign language writing apprehension and its relationship to FLA and have developed a scale that accurately measures Japanese college students' L2 writing anxiety. They incorporate writing anxiety research conducted in other contexts, most notably that of Cheng *et al.* (1999), to find comparable writing anxiety subcomponents. Cheng and her colleagues compared L2 classroom anxiety to writing anxiety and writing achievement in Taiwanese English majors. They discovered three main factors specific to writing anxiety: low-self confidence in writing, adverse attitudes towards writing in English and writing evaluation apprehension. Likewise, Cornwell and McKay (2000) found similar subcomponents of FLWA for Japanese students of English such as fear of negative criticism (fear of evaluation, showing writing to others) and students' attitudes and views about their writing aptitude (enjoyment of writing, negative perceptions about writing ability). Using a modified version of Daly and Miller's (1975) Second Language Writing Apprehension Scale, they found four factors influencing L2 writing apprehension as opposed to Daly and Miller's single factor, fear of writing evaluation. Contextual differences, including L2 versus L1 contexts, could explain differences in anxiety subcomponents, as many FLA studies find multiple factors in skill-specific foreign language anxieties (Aida, 1994; Kimura, 2008; Kitano, 2001).

Takahashi (2010) examined possible correlations between L2 writing anxiety, motivation, self-perceptions of ability, proficiency and performance in English classes at a private Japanese university. Like Cornwell and McKay (1997, 2000), she used a translated and modified version of Daly and Miller's (1975) scale, along with Kitano's (2001) Can-do scale for perceived language ability and Ely's (1986) motivational scale. All four factors were

negatively correlated with FLWA and, interestingly, to a greater degree than Takahashi's (2004) previous study of the same four factors and general FLA. The cause of this strong correlation, she proposes, is the weakness of English writing skills in Japanese classrooms, leading to its status as 'one of the most unpopular, disliked activities in the classroom' (Takahashi, 2010: 97). Other reasons for this relationship could be classroom context (non-English majors in a lower-level English class), an entirely different orthographic system and sound/symbol correspondences between Japanese and English.

Speaking anxiety

FLA is most commonly tied with speaking because, out of the four skills areas, it entails the most public evaluation and is the primary form of communication in the classroom. As such, researchers have found speaking anxiety to be a main component of FLA as well as a distinct skill-specific anxiety that can affect learners independently of general FLA (Aida, 1994; Horwitz *et al*., 1986; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). While examining relationships between general language anxiety and FLRA, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) also found a strong correlation between experience overseas and lowered anxiety in speaking English. They proposed that the heightened self-confidence that comes with overseas experience could lead to better achievement (i.e. higher grades) by students. Aida (1994) similarly found that exposure to the target culture lowered anxiety in her study of American university learners of Japanese. Her research supports Horwitz's claim that communication anxiety and fear of negative social evaluation are the main components of general FLA and found that most students' anxieties about learning Japanese came directly from discomfort or apprehension about speaking. As we shall see later, social evaluation concerns play a powerful role in supporting language learner silence. We should reiterate the point here that social anxiety is by no means an entirely separate construct to FLA, but rather it overlaps with and feeds into the 'distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours' of FLA, as characterised Horwitz *et al*. (1986: 128).

Interestingly, some studies have found that L2 speaking anxiety manifests both within and outside of the language classroom, supporting a 'dual conceptualization' of foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) (Woodrow, 2006) in situations where the target language is also the language of everyday use. Ohata (2005) interviewed five Japanese students in a US college setting to investigate their emotional struggles when studying in America, especially those related to communication anxiety. Among all students, the fear of negative evaluation or 'losing face' in front of the teacher or other students was the highest anxiety-provoking factor (see the 'Feared predictions' section). Students often avoided eye contact with the teacher, even if they were confident about the topic, so as to avoid

being selected and potentially criticised or corrected by the instructor. Students in Ohata's study reported discomfort from the competitive atmosphere when speaking English in front of Japanese friends, which from the students' perception was provoked by speaking in front of native speakers. Feeling in opposition to her friends made one student in the study feel isolated and disconnected from her Japanese student group, causing great stress. Like Ohata, Woodrow (2006) found that 85% of students experienced some form of L2 speaking anxiety and that students were most anxious when communicating with native speakers, including teachers, and when performing in front of other students. The students participating in the study were non-native speakers of various ethnicities. Woodrow, distinguishing between learners from Confucian Heritage cultures (CHC), such as Japan and China, and non-CHC learners, reported that the former tended to be more anxious.

The Mixed-Methods Study into L2 Classroom Silence

The lead author conducted a large-scale, multisite investigation into the prevalence of silent behaviour among 924 learners studying English within university L2 classes in Japan. Using a low inference, structured observation instrument called the Classroom Oral Participation Scheme (COPS) (King, 2013a, 2013b), quantitative data produced by minute-by-minute, real-time coding built up a picture of students' oral participation within 30 classes located at nine institutions across Japan. This data uncovered surprisingly low levels of oral production by students. Over the course of 48 hours of minute-by-minute observation, there were a mere seven coded instances of student-initiated talk, with this type of discourse taking up less than 0.25% of total lesson time. In comparison, there were 1297 instances of teacher-initiated talk, accounting for slightly over 45% of the total observed time. Due to their power to shape oral exchanges and control the floor, prior to the commencement of the study it had been expected that teachers would dominate classroom discourse to some extent, but the disparity between the levels of student-initiated talk and teacher-initiated talk that was uncovered was remarkable. In addition to this, coded instances of no oral participation at all by any participants (i.e. neither staff nor students spoke) accounted for just over one-quarter of the study's observed lesson time. This compelling evidence suggests that there exists a robust trend towards student silence in Japan's L2 university classrooms, which displays little variation across diverse learning contexts.

While a structured observation approach proved to be highly effective in establishing the existence of silence within classrooms, it was less suited to investigating salient causes of learner reticence and, indeed, how students perceived the act of remaining silent during L2 instruction.

Therefore, in order to gain a deeper, individual-level analysis of learner silence, a qualitative phase of research was embarked upon. It was during this part of the project that data emerged suggesting that there is an intriguing and significant connection between social anxiety and the avoidance of talk by some language learners in Japan. Eleven participants, each of whom was interviewed twice in sessions lasting up to one hour, consented to take part in this phase of the study. The follow-up interviews were conducted once transcription and a preliminary analysis of each encounter had been completed. The interviewee sample reflected the diverse nature of English language education within Japan's university system and consisted of both language and non-language majors whose L2 proficiency varied considerably. In light of this variation, the participants were able to choose whether their interviews were conducted in English, Japanese, or a mixture of both languages. It was important to provide an opportunity for interviewees to discuss their ideas about classroom silence in their mother tongue as silence was a topic most had never even considered before, and to provide an illuminating account of their beliefs and experiences required a fair amount of self-reflection and the externalisation of implicit assumptions about classroom behaviour and discourse. All interview sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed in full. A systematic process of back-translation (Brislin, 1970) ensured that Japanese language data were reliably translated into English. Transcription and data analysis were performed concurrently so that findings could feed into subsequent interviews. This iterative process of content analysis saw the major theme of social anxiety and silence emerge, and it became clear after repeated coding that much of what interviewees said about refraining from talk in the L2 classroom was highly relevant to Clark and Wells' (1995) seminal model of social anxiety. It should be noted here that although the study uncovered multiple, interconnected sources of classroom silence – for example, the silence of student apathy and disengagement from the learning process that is strongly connected to teacher-centred instructional methods or the silence of non-verbal learning activities that do not require speech in order to be performed successfully – it was students' avoidance of talk because of a fear of negative evaluation by their peers that stood out as *the* recurring theme in the interview data.

Social Anxiety and Language Learner Silence

Clark and Wells' (1995) cognitive model

In this section, we discuss how the interview study's findings map onto Clark and Wells' (1995) model of social anxiety and consider how facets of the study's sociocultural context appear to interplay with

learner-internal factors to support students' avoidance of classroom talk. Positing that social anxiety stems from problematic beliefs about oneself and one's social world and that these erroneous beliefs cause individuals to interpret specific social situations in an excessively negative manner, Clark and Wells' framework represents one of the best known, experimentally supported explanations of social anxiety (McManus & Hirsch, 2007). Four dynamically interacting elements are present in the model (feared predictions, self-focused attention, safety behaviours and somatic/cognitive symptoms), and these processes all work together to maintain a person's anxiety during social encounters (see Figure 6.1). Of course, it is worth pointing out here that the language classroom represents a highly public social performance situation in which one's behaviour and utterances are open to the scrutiny of others, and it appears that Japanese learners in particular tend to regard such settings as requiring what is known as a *soto* (meaning public or outside one's group) mode of communication that involves the avoidance of self-disclosure and reduced levels of verbal
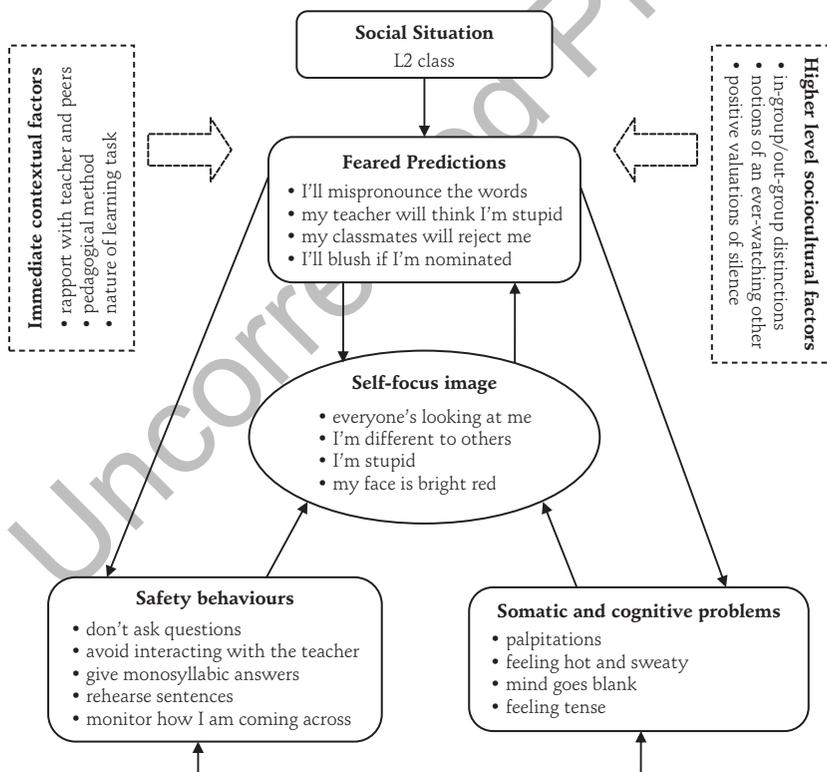

Figure 6.1 A cognitive-behavioural model of a silent L2 learner's social anxiety (Adapted from King [2014] and based on Clark and Wells' 1995 original model)

interaction (for more on how the notions of *soto* and its opposing concept of *uchi* relate to communicative behaviour in Japan, see Gudykunst & Nishida, 1993; King, 2013a; Lebra, 1993; Nakane, 2007).

Feared predictions: The 'eyes' that silence

Also known as social fear beliefs, feared predictions relate to a socially anxious individual's belief that his or her social performance is not of an acceptable standard and will likely be judged harshly by others, with any perceived deficiencies being seen as an indication of the individual's weakness. Clark and Wells (1995) point out that these dysfunctional self-concept and social action beliefs can be distinguished into three categories: (1) excessively high standards for social performance, (2) conditional beliefs concerning social evaluation and (3) unconditional beliefs about the self. Reflecting the first category, a strong theme to emerge in the data was the unrealistic perfectionism of the language learners in the sample (see Dewaele, this volume, and Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Interviewees repeatedly talked about their fear of making mistakes when called on to speak in the target language and related how they were concerned not only about the lexico-grammatical accuracy of their speech and whether their pronunciation was comprehensible, but also whether the content of their utterances was relevant and interesting to others. It seems such high standards of L2 conduct are only likely to feed into a learner's already existing anxiety levels, as Clark and Wells (1995) point out that setting exceptionally high standards for one's social performance tends to generate anxiety because the standards are so difficult to achieve.

Regarding the social evaluation element of feared predictions, participants spoke about feeling scrutinised and judged by peers while lessons were in progress, and a number of learners made references to the 'eyes' they felt were always around them. The sociocultural backdrop to this belief is the enculturated notion that there exists an ever-present, ever-watching 'other' within Japanese society that constantly monitors and inhibits people's behaviour with its disapproving gaze (see Clancy, 1990; Greer, 2000; Lebra, 1993; McVeigh, 2002). Under such circumstances, classrooms become emotional danger zones where speaking up brings with it the risk of negative evaluation, the potential to cause shame and embarrassment and, ultimately, the possibility of rejection by peers. Indeed, when asked to describe how they felt about being required to communicate in L2 during lessons, the term most frequently used by the interviewees was the word *hazukashii*, meaning 'it's embarrassing'. If we also consider the great importance placed on maintaining face during public social interactions in Japan (see Cocroft & Ting-Toomey, 1994), an ever-more fertile environment for the avoidance of talk becomes apparent. Franks

(2000) sums up well this notion that silence provides the ideal strategy for saving face and avoiding social penalty when he states:

> Face-saving is crucial to the Japanese way of life, and through the culture's tremendous value of face-saving (or saving the dignity of both the speaker and the listener) silence is encouraged. During communication interactions, therefore, silence together with indirect language is used to save embarrassment, to ease tension, and to respect the feelings of the speaker. The rationale here is that what you don't say cannot hurt anyone. (Franks, 2000: 6)

Self-focused attention: Distracted into silence

The social fear beliefs of socially anxious language learners appear to be maintained in part through an increase in self-focused attention during classroom situations. Clark and Wells (1995) contend that when the socially anxious enter a situation that holds the potential for negative evaluation by others, their attention is shifted inwards towards monitoring and observing their own self-generated image and how they believe their image is coming across to others. This heightened processing of the self as a social object is problematic because it directs attention towards feared anxiety responses (overemphasising them) and interferes with objective processing of feedback from the social environment. Thus, a socially anxious learner will typically overestimate the extent to which his/her anxiety symptoms are visible to others (Purdon *et al.*, 2001). Fuelled by negatively skewed social-evaluative thoughts, the learner's hypersensitivity to peer reactions leads to an attention-draining preoccupation with impression management (Leary, 1995) and reluctance to draw further unwanted attention from peers by orally participating in the lesson. One interviewee, a second-year languages major, recounted how she feared being called on to speak during whole-class discussions because she was concerned her opinion might be rejected by the other students and that she would be perceived as 'different'. She described how her classmates were always at the forefront of her mind while lessons were in progress and that she constantly worried about how she was coming across to them, preferring to keep silent rather than take an active role in discussions. Of course, attention is a finite resource and by focusing too much on internal information (i.e. feelings of anxiety and projection of self-image), this learner would have had less attention available for linguistic processing and formulating target language utterances. By diverting concentration away from lesson content as it actually arises, this attentional shift towards self-focused attention and the heightened processing of the social self makes active oral participation all the more difficult to achieve. It is interesting to note, therefore, that rather than signifying mental passivity, silences that occur

during episodes of self-focused attention may in fact represent periods of intense cognitive activity for socially anxious learners.

Safety behaviours: Maintaining anxiety through silent behaviour

The student interviewees provided rich testimony concerning the strategies they used in the classroom to try and prevent their social fears from being realised. Clark and Wells (1995) term these strategies 'safety behaviours', and explain that the socially anxious will engage in a range of different safety behaviours in order to try and avoid negative evaluation during feared situations. Participants who described their social evaluation fears spoke openly about the ways in which they either minimised, or more preferably avoided altogether, speaking (in L1 or L2) during language classes. For example, asking questions to the teacher and initiating discourse were meticulously avoided, and this pattern of behaviour is borne out unambiguously in the study's observation data. Another popular tactic for minimising verbalisation was to provide only the shortest, one-word responses when called on to speak by the instructor. Such silence-seeking behaviour is strongly supported at a learning situation level by teachers' use of pedagogical techniques employing a rigid Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) pattern of classroom discourse (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). This teacher-centred pattern of classroom interaction was commonly encountered during the observation phase of the study.

For some socially anxious learners, seating position appears to play a major role in their safety-seeking behaviour. As Falout (2014) rightly points out, the seating layout can majorly impact on the interpersonal dynamics of a language classroom, with rank-and-file arrangements representing essentially anti-social learning environments in which peer-to-peer communication is stymied. One fourth-year non-languages major, whose weekly English class conformed to this rank-and-file arrangement, described her reluctance to speak publicly during lessons and an almost neurotic fear of being ridiculed by her peers. She related how each week she would make for a seating position right at the back of the classroom, and would attempt to locate someone of a larger build to sit directly behind. Once ensconced in such a position, her strategy was to crouch down and keep her gaze lowered for the duration of the lesson (cf. Ohata, 2005). Through the use of these safety behaviours, it was hoped that the instructor would fail to notice the student and that she would be able to escape the daunting prospect of being nominated to speak publicly in the target language. This participant's testimony provides a good illustration of how a dynamic interplay between immediate contextual factors and learner-internal processes exists that helps shape students' classroom behaviours and discourse patterns.

In addition to physical avoidance strategies, the safety behaviours of socially anxious individuals may also comprise internal mental processes

(Clark, 1999; Clark & Wells, 1995). In the case of language learners anxious to avoid mistakes and the ensuing (imagined) negative evaluation that goes with them, this might involve mentally rehearsing something over and over again before saying it aloud or meticulously translating an utterance word-for-word in one's head before a verbal response is made. The danger with such an approach is that extended silent pausing for linguistic processing can lead to a breakdown in communication, as unnatural periods of silence do have the potential to constrain interactions. (We should note here, however, that the notion of a 'natural' turn-taking pause length is a culturally relative phenomenon [see Enninger, 1991; Scollon & Scollon, 1990], and a number of scholars [e.g. Tanaka, 1999; Yamada, 1997] assert that the Japanese do appear to have a relatively high tolerance for extended silences occurring at turn-taking junctures.) Safety behaviours, then, have the potential to make social interactions less successful and, rather than reducing an individual's anxiety, they actually contribute to it by increasing self-monitoring and self-consciousness, thus increasing the likelihood of feared predictions coming true (Clark, 1999; Clark & Wells, 1995; McManus & Hirsch, 2007; Salkovskis, 1991).

Somatic and cognitive symptoms: Discomfort in the classroom

A range of somatic and cognitive are associated with social anxiety (for an extensive list of symptoms, see Purdon *et al.*'s [2001] Social Anxiety Symptoms Scale). Interviewees in the current study spoke about experiencing a number of symptoms during their English classes. For example, one English language major, who despite being relatively proficient in the target language, described her fears surrounding being called on to speak English in front of peers and explained how she would regularly experience palpitations during lessons, with her heart rate seeming to rise as her self-perceived image plummeted. This disagreeable cocktail of phenomena was, unfortunately but perhaps unsurprisingly, accompanied by a strong desire to flee the situation. Other interviewees discussing feelings of embarrassment during L2 classes reported experiencing clammy hands, weak voices, blushing, feelings of confusion, mental blanks and a sense of panic. In a heightened state of arousal during feared situations, the socially anxious are hyper vigilant for anxiety symptoms and when these arise, they are interpreted as impending signs of failure to meet desired social performance expectations (Clark, 2001). Exacerbated by safety behaviours and unrealistically magnified by self-focused attention, it is clear that symptoms like those described above play an important role in socially anxious language learners' silences as they are intimately and dynamically linked to the other cognitive elements within Clark and Wells' (1995) model, which help to produce and maintain social anxiety.

Some Suggestions for Reducing Social Anxiety and Increasing Oral Production

In this section, we briefly discuss some ideas on how to reduce social anxiety levels within L2 classrooms, thus encouraging more oral interaction among students. But before doing this, we would like to make the point that it is not our belief that social anxiety can or should be totally eradicated from language classrooms, even if this were possible. Social anxiety exists on a continuum (McManus & Hirsch, 2007) and it is perfectly natural for students to feel some level of anxiety during demanding social performance situations, such as when giving a presentation to classmates or taking part in a speech contest. Indeed, various authors (e.g. Brown *et al.*, 2001; Daubney, 2007) have speculated on the facilitative properties that anxiety may possess in some learning situations. However, when social anxiety acts to inhibit learners to such an extent that they are no longer able to function effectively in the classroom, retreating into the supposed safety of silence and thus missing important opportunities for L2 development through oral production and interaction, then we believe it is time for educators to act. It should be noted that the study on learner silence described in this chapter did not set out to measure the effectiveness of anxiety-reducing strategies and so our suggestions are offered only in a tentative manner.

With regard to group-orientated strategies, we believe careful consideration by language educators of how the group dynamics of their classrooms (see Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003) can best be manipulated holds the greatest potential for successfully reducing students' social anxiety levels. As social anxiety is dependent on a fear of negative social evaluation, anything instructors can do at the start of courses to promote *acceptance* (a term from Humanistic Psychology, meaning non-judgmental, positive regard) among class members will be of benefit in reducing the likelihood of negative evaluations occurring within the group. Interpersonal relationships based on acceptance acknowledge that human beings are complex and flawed but that they can still be regarded in a non-evaluative, positive manner. Classrooms characterised by a general feeling of acceptance represent learning contexts in which social fear beliefs are downplayed, and the benefits of this for socially anxious silent learners are obvious. As Schmuck and Schmuck (cited in Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998: 116) point out, 'Students do not directly express their own ideas and opinions publicly until they have learned that their peers and the teacher will not reject them'.

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) list various ways in which teachers can consciously promote acceptance, but one of the most important factors is that students have the opportunity to learn genuine information about each other through low-risk self-disclosure activities. Proximity

and contact also play vital roles here and so it is essential that small-group membership is changed regularly within the class in order for the silencing effects of in-group/out-group distinctions to be nullified and that, if possible, seating arrangements are manipulated in such a manner so as to encourage communication and good interpersonal dynamics (see Falout, 2014). Teachers can contribute to a supportive and collaborative classroom atmosphere by providing opportunities for meaningful target language communication to take place via non-public activities (i.e. within pairs or small groups) and by reducing levels of error correction so that there is an emphasis on the fluency rather than the accuracy of students' L2 utterances.

Regarding individual-level strategies, we believe that cognitive-behavioural approaches have good potential for enabling learners to challenge and adjust their negatively skewed beliefs concerning social performance and social evaluation in the L2 classroom. Currently, research in this area is decidedly scant, but a recent study by Curry (2014) focusing on a small sample of Japanese undergraduate learners of English does seem to suggest that cognitive behavioural techniques can indeed provide students with the tools to overcome debilitating anxiety in their L2 learning. Within the Japanese tertiary context, there has been a growth of self-access centres where learning advisors provide one-to-one language advice for students, and these centres appear to be the ideal setting for implementing such techniques.

As socially anxious individuals have an unrealistically negative impression of their social performance and how they are coming across to others, generating self-images of themselves performing badly in feared situations, one idea is to use video feedback as a means of restructuring cognitive processes to achieve belief change (Clark, 2001; Hirsch & MacManus, 2007). After drawing anxious learners' attention to the role of self-focused attention and safety behaviours in maintaining anxiety, video feedback could help individuals to gain a more realistic understanding of how they appear to others rather than basing their assumptions purely on interoceptive information. Asking a learner to rate how anxious she looked during a series of L2 learning situation role plays in which she practiced focusing externally and avoided her usual in-class safety behaviours (such as not responding to teacher elicits or only providing monosyllabic answers) would help the individual to see the benefits of eschewing hypervigilant self-monitoring during lessons, helping her to gain a more objective impression of how she comes across to others. Unfortunately, space limitations mean that we are only able to touch on the use of video feedback here as a means for combating social anxiety among silent language learners, and so we direct readers to Hirsch and MacManus (2007) for a more comprehensive account of how this technique has been used as part of a systematic cognitive-based treatment within clinical contexts.

Conclusion

There are currently epidemic levels of learner disengagement within Japan's L2 university classrooms, and student silence is a trend that holds true there across a diverse range of classroom contexts. The reasons behind this silence are complex and defy simplistic generalisations. Learners may be unable or unwilling to speak up in their language classes for any number of reasons, and these reasons are shaped by interconnected variables that dynamically interplay with each other at individual and environmental levels. However, the mixed-methods study described in this chapter uncovered social anxiety as a prime factor in learners' avoidance of talk, and this silence of social inhibition appears to be well supported by unhelpful pedagogical practices on the one hand and higher-level sociocultural themes relating to the value of discretion and caution in public encounters on the other. Following a comprehensive overview of Japanese-related L2 anxiety research, this chapter has illustrated how Clark and Wells' (1995) model of social anxiety provides us with a useful framework through which we can better understand the cognitive processes and in-class safety behaviours of silently anxious learners of English in Japan. It would be interesting to replicate the mixed-methods study described here within the non-L2, general content classes of Japanese universities to see whether students' patterns of silent behaviour hold true when foreign languages are taken out of the equation. Were this true, the implications for the construct of FLA would be intriguing. One thing for certain though is that language learners in Japan can in no way claim to have a monopoly on reticent classroom behaviour and so we end our chapter with a call for more classroom-based, student-orientated research to be undertaken within a wider range of national contexts, putting silence at the very heart of the investigation.

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