

## English Language Anxiety: A Study of Junior High School Students in Morioka, Iwate, Japan

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**Abstract:** The study aims to evaluate Junior High school students' level of anxiety towards English language learning. The population for this study was Junior High School students, Morioka, Iwate, Japan. A sample of 50 students (25 males and 25 females) was selected randomly. Questionnaire was developed to find out the level of anxiety in Junior High School students. Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version XX was used to analyze the data. Two independent sample T- test was employed to compare the mean scores of male and female students. It was found that Japanese Junior High School students have anxiety towards English language learning. Moreover, there was no significant difference between male and female students level of anxiety of Junior High school, Morioka, Iwate, Japan. In the light of findings of the present study, the collective efforts by the faculty and students would be helpful to overcome anxiety towards English language learning in students of Junior High School, Morioka, Iwate, Japan.

### Keywords:

Junior High School, Anxiety, English Language Learning, Significant difference

### Introduction:

There are many psychological diseases found in people. One of the common diseases is anxiety. A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with a certain outcome is called anxiety. An anxiety is a form of uneasiness or nervousness which is related to students' behavior towards second language learning. It include listening and speaking skills. There are different types of anxiety. It include: state anxiety, trait anxiety, and situation specific anxiety. Japanese students feel anxiety in English language learning at Junior High School level. As a researcher, I observed that Japanese students feel

anxiety at Junior high school level. In this research, there are two research questions:

Why Japanese students feel anxiety at Junior High School level?

Is there a significant difference between male and female Japanese students at Junior High School level?

### Rationale:

As a researcher, we need to find, why Japanese students feel anxiety at Junior High school level? In this way, as a researcher, we search the factors and

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causes of anxiety. For this purpose, we include as a sample and population through secondary level male and female students.

### Literature Review:

Foreign language anxiety is defined in multiple ways. A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome is called anxiety. Anxiety is a form of uneasiness or nervousness which is related to students' behavior towards second language learning. It is a cause of tension, nervousness, and worries with rouse of nervous system (Horwitz, 1986). This shows that anxiety affects English language proficiency and students go under stress and pressure because of nervousness and anxiety. Scovel (1978) observed that anxiety is a relation to some specific events. He explains that students experience apprehension in different situations. They have fear of language which creates impact on their English language communication. Students are under stress and pressure and feel anxious in different situations. Former researches indicate that anxiety affects achievement of students. Mastuda and Gobel found that there is a negative impact of language anxiety on academic grades of students. This means that result of students is affected by English language anxiety. Language learners' performance is affected in tests and assessments. Because, a students can perform better in tests and exams, if he overcomes his stress and anxiety. It shows that it would help them to get better grades and results and get rid of stress and pressure. Language learners feel and experience tension, worry, and nervousness and stress on different occasions. In other words, they experience anxiety. There are three components of such anxiety. Horwitz (1986) has discussed these 3 components. It include the following components:

Communication Apprehension

Fear of negative evaluation

Test anxiety

Firstly, in terms of communication apprehension, it is assured that English language students have great ideas. But, they could not express because of insufficient second language knowledge and information such as vocabulary. Horwitz (1986) defines it as a type of shyness. He further explains that shyness is a cause of fear which results in anxiety and worst communication. It seems quite clear that stress and flawless communication requires confidence and mature knowledge of language. Because, sufficient knowledge of language makes ESL learners confident. It helps language learners to communicate effectively. In addition, they are able to overcome shyness and feel confident while communicating with others.

The second component is fear of negative evaluation. It means that English language learners are not confident about their communication. They don't know what are they communicating or asking. This means that they cannot interact with others. These learners lack confidence and communication skills. It can be stated that sound knowledge of language is important for effective, flawless, and confident communication. Because, it helps language learners to make proper Social impression. Test anxiety is defined as a kind of performance anxiety resulting in form of academic evaluation. This is called fear of academic evaluation. According to pedagogical need of institution, students should be continuously assessed and evaluated on different level of proficiency.

Former researches divulged that anxiety is a great problem in learning a second language. Some researches reveal difference in performance of students with less anxious and high anxious students. Researches show that nervousness and tension create

hurdle for students in learning the target language. Students with low level of anxiety perform better and learn target language successfully. On the other hand, students with high anxiety, stress and nervousness give poor performance in academics. Macintyre and Gardener (1989) discussed about students with low level of anxiety. They learnt vocabulary and found it less difficult to recall memorized content and information. On the other hand, student with high level of anxiety found very difficult to recall the memorized vocabulary. Similarly, Steinburg and Horwitz (1986) discussed effects of anxiety on content of explanation of TAT pictures provided in 2<sup>nd</sup> language. According to research, students with low anxiety found easier to explain ambiguous scene in TAT test. On the other hand, students with high anxiety found difficult to describe the ambiguous scenes in TAT test. Researcher explains that anxiety affects students' performance in assessment of learning English as a second language.

It can be stated that anxiety causes trouble for students. It affects their performance in assessment. Moreover, students are not able to give good performance in descriptive nature of test because of anxiety. It also affects their learning and memorization.

Current studies on language anxiety reveal negative correlation. Wilson (2006) showed negative relationship between language anxiety and oral test grades. Research findings reveal that student with low anxiety performed better than those from high anxiety group of students. He discussed that the biggest cause of anxiety was speaking in front of others. There were many reasons. It include fear of grammatical mistakes, pronunciation, and inability to talk spontaneously.

Mak (2011) discussed in his research that students face anxiety because of speaking in front of class without preparation. Research explained that students have fear of other students in front of class without preparation.

Research explained that students have fear of other students. It creates nervousness and feeling of uneasiness in students. It can be stated that there is certain impact of audience and crowd of people on English language communication. Students become victim of anxiety, trouble, and nervousness because of audience. It shakes confidence of students.

According to Young, there are six causes of anxiety. It include: surprise exam, teacher teaching style, teacher – student relationship, intra and inter personal traits of students, belief of students about language learning, and belief of teacher about language teaching methodology. It shows that students suffer from anxiety because of assessments, tests, and exams. Moreover, teaching methodologies and strategies play a vital role in learning English as a second language. If teaching methodology is not planned and effective, it results in language anxiety. Bailey found the similar results in his research. Furthermore, Horwitz divided anxiety into three types. It include: student ability to understand, behavior of a teacher, and exams. On the basis of the three types of anxiety, he designed a research instrument, (FLCAS) Foreign Language Communication Anxiety Scale. FLCAS has been used by many researchers to find out level of anxiety and nervousness in English language students. It can be stated that there is a great impact of assessments, tests, exams, teachers, and teaching methodology on English language learning of students.

As regards the present study, it was an effort to examine students' anxiety and nervousness level towards English language being taught as a second language in Japan. The findings of this study revealed that anxiety affects language learning.

**Objectives of the present research:**

The main objective of this study was to find out factors as perceived by Japanese students that may become a reason of anxiety at Junior High School level in learning English as a second language in Japan. Another objective was to compare the level of anxiety and nervousness amongst male and female students of Junior High School in Japan.

**Research Questions:**

The main research questions, used in this study were as follows:

Why Japanese Junior High School students feel anxiety in learning English language?

What is the difference between the level of anxiety among male and female students of Japanese Junior High School?

Hypothesis: Following hypothesis were made to find out the level of anxiety among students:

H0: There is no anxiety regarding English language learning

H1: There is anxiety regarding English language learning

H0: There is no significant difference between male and female students of Japanese Junior High school students' level of anxiety

H1: There is significant difference between male and female students of Japanese Junior High school students' level of anxiety

**Sample:**

To accomplish the objectives of this study, a researcher selected a total of 50 students (25 male and 25 female) studying English at Japanese Junior High School, Morioka, Iwate, Japan. All participants were Japanese students whose mother tongue is Japanese. Sample selected by method of random sampling. All students belong to Junior High School (Grade 7, 8, and 9). Their age was between 13 and 15 years.

**Research Instrument:**

Research instrument i.e. questionnaire was developed, consisting 24 items used for this study. It contains two parts. One was intended to collect personal information about participants, such as their name, age, and gender etc. Other consisted of relevant questions. It was scored on 5 point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) to capture the specific and core nature of second language anxiety in classroom and to provide researchers with a standard and relevant measures.

**Data Collection and Analysis:**

Questionnaire was used as a research tool. It was administered personally to students of Junior High School, Morioka, Iwate, Japan. The return rate was 100%. The response of every respondent for each question on Likert Scale was entered into database. SPSS was employed to analyze data. Firstly, descriptive analyses was performed to compute the percentage and average response of each item and each kind of anxiety to see the general situation of students' anxiety and nervousness in learning English as a second language.

Secondly, two independent sample t- test was employed to see if there was significant difference in anxiety level between male and female students of Junior High

Mean Male	Mean Female	df	P(T<=t) two tail	T Critical two tail
3.2	3.2	46	0.69	2.01

School, Morioka, Iwate, Japan.

### Results:

All the item included in the questionnaire were analyzed separately.

According to Table 1, the results of this study show that out of 50 students (25 male and 25 female) 21 (42%) students disagree that they are interested in learning English. The average response to this statement is 4.06 that lies between 4th and 5th options which are closer to 'strongly disagree' 5th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

17 (34%) students (Q2) agreed that they don't like to speak English. The average response to this statement is 2.68 that lies between 2nd and 3rd option. It means students agreed with the statement.

17 (34%) students disagreed that they hesitate to speak English. The average response to this statement is 3.04 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

14 (28%) students agreed that they have fear of speaking English. The average response to this statement is 2.72 that lies between 2nd and 3rd option. It means students agreed with the statement.

9 (18%) students strongly agreed that students are frightened because of aggressive behaviour of teacher in English class. The average response to this statement is 2.28 that lies between 2nd and 3rd option. It means students agreed with the statement.

8 (16%) students agreed that students shiver while

speaking English. The average response to this statement is 2.26 that lies between 2nd and third option. It means students agreed with the statement.

16 (32%) students agreed that Japanese students can't speak English to native English speaker. The average response to this statement is 3. This shows moderate response to the statement.

17 (34%) students disagreed that Japanese students are under stress while speaking English in front of large audience. The average response to this statement is 3.26 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

17 (34%) students disagreed that Japanese students are nervous when they speak English without necessary preparation. The average response to this statement is 4. It means students disagreed with the statement.

17 (34%) students disagreed that Japanese students feel shy while speaking English. The average response to this statement is 3.42 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

24 (48%) students disagreed that Japanese students lack confidence in speaking English. The average response to this statement is 3.84 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

22 (44%) students disagreed that Japanese students are worried about grammatical mistakes while speaking English. The average score to this statement is 3.62 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

19(38%) students disagreed that Japanese students have fear of making grammatical mistakes while speaking English. The average score to this statement is 3.42 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

19(38%) students disagreed that Japanese students are usually confuse while speaking English. The average response to this statement is 3.74 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

17(34%) students disagreed that Japanese students are not good at speaking English. The average response to this statement is 3.2 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

20(40%) students disagreed that Japanese students can't express opinion regarding any topic in their language class. The average response to this statement is 3.12 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

15(30%) students disagreed that Japanese students avoid to speak English. The average response to this statement is 3.08 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

14(28%) students disagreed that Japanese students can't speak English in front of large audience. The average response to this statement is 3.26 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

22(44%) students disagreed that Japanese students stammer while speaking English. The average response to this statement is 4.02 that lies between 4th and 5th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

9(18%) students agreed that Japanese students don't have enough vocabulary to speak English. The average response to this statement is 2.34 that lies between 2nd and 3rd option. It means students agreed with the statement

15(30%) students disagreed that Japanese students start to panic because of lack of vocabulary while speaking English. The average response to this statement is 3.54 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

21(42%) students disagreed that Japanese students are worried about pronunciation while speaking English. The average response to this statement is 3.58 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

15(30%) students disagreed that Japanese students' leg tremble while speaking English. The average response to this statement is 3.04 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

15(30%) students disagreed that Japanese students twiddle with objects while speaking English. The average response to this statement is 3.08 that lies between 3rd and 4th option. It means students disagreed with the statement.

In conclusion, there were two hypothesis: Null hypothesis and Alternate hypothesis. Our null hypothesis is rejected because there is anxiety regarding English language learning in Junior High School students.

Furthermore, two types of hypothesis were made to compare the level of anxiety between male and female students of a Junior High School, Morioka, Iwate, Japan

Table1: Students level of anxiety regarding English language learning (n=50)

Q.No.	Statements	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Average response
1.	Are you interested in speaking English?	1(2%)	2(4%)	8(16%)	21(42%)	18(36%)	4.06
2.	Japanese students don't like to speak English.	2(4%)	17(34%)	26(52%)	5(10%)	0(0%)	2.68
3.	Japanese students hesitate to speak English.	3(6%)	15(30%)	12(24%)	17(34%)	3(6%)	3.04
4.	Japanese students have fear of speaking English.	8(16%)	14(28%)	15(30%)	10(20%)	3(6%)	2.72
5.	Japanese students are frightened because of aggressive behavior of teacher in their English classroom.	18(36%)	9(18%)	17(34%)	3(6%)	3(6%)	2.28
6.	Japanese students shiver while speaking English.	20(40%)	8(16%)	12(24%)	9(18%)	1(2%)	2.26
7.	Japanese students cannot speak English to a native English speaker.	3(6%)	16(32%)	13(26%)	14(28%)	4(8%)	3
8.	Japanese students are under stress while speaking English in front of large audience.	4(8%)	6(12%)	18(36%)	17(34%)	5(10%)	3.26
9.	Japanese students are nervous when they speak English without necessary preparation.	1(2%)	3(6%)	10(20%)	17(34%)	19(38%)	4
10.	Japanese students feel shy while speaking English.	3(6%)	8(16%)	13(26%)	17(34%)	9(18%)	3.42
11.	Japanese students lack confidence in speaking English.	2(4%)	4(8%)	7(14%)	24(48%)	13(26%)	3.84
12.	Japanese students are worried about grammatical mistakes while speaking English.	2(4%)	5(10%)	12(24%)	22(44%)	9(18%)	3.62
13.	Japanese students have fear of making grammatical mistakes while speaking English.	4(8%)	6(12%)	13(26%)	19(38%)	8(16%)	3.42
14.	Japanese students are usually confuse while speaking English.	2(4%)	4(8%)	12(24%)	19(38%)	13(26%)	3.74
15.	Japanese students are not good at speaking English.	2(4%)	11(22%)	16(32%)	17(34%)	4(8%)	3.2
16.	Japanese students cannot express opinion regarding any topic in their language class.	4(8%)	14(28%)	8(16%)	20(40%)	4(8%)	3.12
17.	Japanese students avoid to speak English.	3(6%)	11(22%)	18(36%)	15(30%)	3(6%)	3.08
18.	Japanese students cannot speak English in front of large audience.	2(4%)	9(18%)	19(38%)	14(28%)	6(12%)	3.26
19.	Japanese students stammer while speaking English.	0(0%)	7(14%)	3(6%)	22(44%)	18(36%)	4.02

20.	Mostly, Japanese students don't have enough vocabulary to speak English.	21 (42%)	9 (18%)	6 (12%)	10 (20%)	4 (8%)	2.34
21.	Japanese students start to panic because of lack of vocabulary while speaking English.	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	19 (38%)	15 (30%)	10 (20%)	3.54
22.	Japanese students are worried about pronunciation while speaking English.	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	11 (22%)	21 (42%)	10 (20%)	3.58
23.	Most students' leg tremble while speaking English.	6 (12%)	13 (26%)	10 (20%)	15 (30%)	6 (12%)	3.04
24.	Mostly, Japanese students twiddle with objects while speaking English.	4 (8%)	9 (18%)	19 (38%)	15 (30%)	3 (6%)	3.08

**Table 2: Comparison of male and female students' level of anxiety towards English language learning (n=50)**

Questions	Male (Mean)	Female (Mean)
1.	3.83	3.62
2.	3.20	3.33
3.	4	2.66
4.	2.95	3.70
5.	3.08	4.04
6.	4.29	3.12
7.	3.66	3.45
8.	3.45	3.37
9.	3.66	3.70
10.	3.79	3.70
11.	2.54	2.70
12.	3.04	3.25
13.	4	3.25
14.	3.58	2.95
15.	3.66	4.08
16.	3.87	3.91
17.	3.33	3.16
18.	3.04	3.25
19.	2.08	3.54
20.	2.25	2.875
21.	1.70	2.16
22.	3.79	2.29
23.	2.83	2.37
24.	2.66	2.58
25.	3.29	2.83
<b>Average Mean</b>	3.2	3.2

H0: There is no significant difference between male and female students level of anxiety regarding English language learning in Junior High School students.

H1: There is a significant difference between male and female students level of anxiety regarding English language learning in Junior High School students.

In the light of the above mentioned hypothesis, the calculated t value (2.01) was not significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  level of significance. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis was rejected. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female students level of anxiety regarding English language learning in Junior High School students.



**Discussion and Conclusion:**

In the light of results of current study, it can be stated that Japanese Junior High School students have anxiety regarding English language learning. Former researches support these findings. Students stated that they are not interested in learning English. They don't like to speak English. Japanese students have no hesitation in speaking English. Majority of the Japanese Junior High School students have fear of speaking English. Japanese students are frightened because of aggressive behavior of a teacher in English class. They also shiver while speaking English. Japanese students face problem when they have to speak English to native speaker. Japanese Junior High school students disagreed that they are under stress while speaking English. Japanese students are not nervous when they speak English without necessary preparation. They are not shy while speaking English. They don't lack confidence in speaking English. Japanese students are not worried about grammatical mistakes while speaking English. They are not confuse while speaking English. Japanese Junior High school students disagreed that they are not good at speaking English. They disagreed that they can't express opinion regarding any topic in language class. They don't avoid to speak English. They don't agree that they can't speak English in front of large audience. They disagreed that they stammer while speaking English. Japanese students don't have enough vocabulary to speak English. They don't panic because of lack of vocabulary while speaking English. They are not worried about pronunciation while speaking English. Japanese students' leg don't tremble while speaking English. They also don't twiddle with objects while speaking English. All the above mentioned results reveal that Japanese Junior High school students feel anxiety regarding English language learning.

The findings of Horwitz (1986) reveal that anxiety results in worst communication. Wilson (2006) revealed that there is a negative relationship between anxiety and students performance on their academics.

Mesthrie divulged in his study that ESL (English as a second language) is always problematic and creates high level of anxiety in students. With reference to research question 2, there is no significant difference between male and female students' level of anxiety of Junior High School, Morioka, Iwate, Japan. According to the results of the research, it can be summarized that anxiety plays very important role in learning English as a second language.

**Recommendations:**

In the light of findings, Japanese students are recommended to take interest in speaking English. They should try to overcome fear of speaking English. They should talk to their teachers and students in English. They can do it on their own. Japanese students should try to use a word immediately after they learn it. They should read every day. They should use synonyms and integrate in their writing. In this way, they can develop their vocabulary. Japanese students should take class attentively. So, they understand the teacher. They should try to learn rules and regulations of English. It would help them to communicate confidently. Students should talk to as many native English speakers as they can. It would help them to overcome stress, fear, and anxiety. They should try to think in English and speak. It would help Japanese students to improve their English communication skills. Teachers should help Japanese students to learn English and overcome stress and anxiety. They should use teaching strategies that should not threaten them. Teachers should try to teach Japanese students in friendly and relaxed atmosphere. It would help them to communicate confidently.

## Appendix

### Student Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not Sure (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1. Are you interested in speaking English?					
2. Japanese students don't like to speak English.					
3. Japanese students hesitate to speak English.					
4. Japanese students have fear of speaking English.					
5. Japanese students are frightened because of aggressive behavior of a teacher in English class.					
6. Japanese students shiver while speaking English.					
7. Japanese students cannot speak English to a native English speaker.					
8. Japanese students are under stress while speaking English in front of a large audience.					
9. Japanese students are nervous when they speak English without necessary preparation.					
10. Japanese students feel shy while speaking English.					
11. Japanese students lack confidence in speaking English.					
12. Japanese students are worried about grammatical mistakes while speaking English.					
13. Japanese students have fear of making grammatical mistakes while speaking English.					
14. Japanese students are usually confuse while speaking English.					
15. Japanese students are not good at speaking English.					
16. Japanese students cannot express opinion in their own words regarding any topic in their classroom.					
17. Japanese students avoid to speak English.					
18. Japanese students cannot speak English in front of large audience.					
19. Japanese students stammer while speaking English					
20. Students legs tremble while speaking English.					
21. Mostly, students don't have enough vocabulary to speak English.					
22. Japanese students start to panic because of lack of vocabulary while speaking English.					
23. Japanese students are worried about pronunciation while speaking English.					
24. Mostly, Japanese students twiddle with pencil in their language classroom					

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