

An Analysis of a Japanese ESL Learner's Diary: Factors Involved in the L2 Learning Process

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This article presents the findings of an analysis of a daily diary, or language learning journal, kept by a Japanese college-level ESL learner in the target language (TL) environment. The analysis resulted in the identification of 65 factors which were involved in the diarist's second language (L2) learning experience over an 8-week period of intensive study in the ESL classroom. Several of the more prominent personal factors are discussed, separately and in their relation to other factors, and the results are compared with past diary studies. Significant findings include the effects of positive feedback on learner motivation, the importance of affective classroom climate for the learner's L2 development, and the role of self-awareness and self-analysis in the diarist's L2 learning process.

日本人 ESL 学習者のダイアリー分析：第 2 言語学習過程に関与する要因に関する一考察

本稿は、米国における 8 週間の英語研修期間に日本人大学生 M が記録したダイアリーの分析結果を提示し、特に、外国語学習に関与する情意的要因 (affective factors) について考察を加えたものである。ダイアリー記載事項の分析の結果、認められた合計 65 の個人的ファクターのうち、M の第 2 言語学習経験に最も深く関与したと考えられるのは、上達に対する要望・希望、学習過程における楽しさ・満足を示す 2 種の感情的ファクター、および、teacher, classmates, materials, Japan, errors/failure の 5 種の非感情的ファクターであった。他に、外国語学習に強い影響力を持つ要因として、教室内の学習者間の相互関係、teacher praise, instruction の重要性を指摘し、第 2 言語の学習プロセスに対する自己認識、自己分析、自己評価を促す内省的な (introspective) 活動としてのダイアリーの有用性を強調している。

1. Introduction

Recent years have seen increasing interest among second language acquisition (SLA) researchers in qualitative, process-oriented ethnographic methodology¹ and the role of affective variables in the SLA process.² This has resulted in the appearance of diary studies in the field of second language (L2) classroom process research, or classroom-centered research. The diary studies of SLA which have been conducted thus far may be divided into two types. One is an introspective, self-observational study in which a diarist-learner analyzes his/her own language learning journal with the aim of discovering factors or variables affecting his/her own language learning process in the classroom (e.g., Bailey, 1980; Bailey, 1983; Jones, 1977; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Schumann, 1980; Schumann & Schumann, 1977). The other is a non-introspective study in which a researcher investigates another diarist-learner's L2 learning process through careful analysis of diary data, which is usually supplemented with qualitative investigations such as questionnaires, structured interviews, and classroom observation (e.g., Brown, 1983; Brown, 1985).³ These studies have shown that diary research of SLA is of significance not only in exploring individual learner variables or personal variables involved in the classroom L2 learning experience, but also in casting light on the mental processes of a language learner, or on the unobservable, psychological dimensions of L2 learning in the formal instructional situation.⁴

The present study explores personal variables or factors which were involved in and influenced an individual learner's process of classroom L2 learning in the target language (TL) country. The study is non-introspective, using qualitative, interpretive analysis and description.⁵ The study also considers the way diary-keeping facilitated the diarist-learner's L2 learning process in the classroom.

2. Method

2.1 Informant

The informant⁶ of the present study, Masayo (to be referred to as M hereafter), was a 19-year-old Japanese female college sophomore, majoring in Japanese literature at a college in Osaka. In the

summer of 1987, M participated in an 8-week intensive ESL program at the center for international programs of a college in the northeastern United States. Throughout the program, M took ESL lessons for 5 hours a day (3 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon) from Monday through Friday. In the morning M took language training in the beginning level (Level 1) ESL class for the first four weeks, and then in the elementary level (Level 2) class for the second four weeks. The two afternoon classes were electives and included students from different levels of ESL proficiency (Levels 1 to 5). The morning teacher remained the same during the 8-week program, but M had three different afternoon teachers, for a total of four (three female & one male). Students attending the program were from different parts of the world (e.g., South America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East), and the average number of students per class was 10. While taking ESL lessons at the language center, M stayed at an on-campus dormitory, sharing a room with a Canadian ESL student who belonged to the high-advanced level (Level 5) class. M also participated in a field trip almost every weekend, together with her teachers and other ESL students.

English was the only language M knew besides Japanese. When she began her ESL training in the U.S., she had studied English for 6 years in junior and senior high school, and had finished one freshman-level English course in Japan. She had never been taught by a native speaker of English, nor had she been abroad before. Her personality could generally be described as outgoing and optimistic. Regarding M's ESL proficiency over the period of 8 weeks, her test scores in aural comprehension showed remarkable progress: from 28 (out of 100) on the initial placement test to 76 on the final achievement test. Her test scores in the other sections rose less or even declined: she went from 56 to 71 in structure; from 24 to 32 in reading comprehension; and declined from 25 to 18 in writing.

2.2 Procedure

Before leaving for ESL training in the U.S., the informant was given a notebook with instructions written in Japanese concerning diary-keeping. The English translation is as follows:

Please make daily entries in Japanese describing your classroom learning experiences in the ESL program you are participating in this summer. You are asked to write about the content of your class or learning activities, and what you thought and felt about the class and any other things which are involved in your language learning experience. Please write your comments and feelings in as much detail as possible, honestly and openly, as if you were keeping your own personal, confidential diary. Try to write your entry before you have forgotten about the class content—as soon as possible after the class.

2.3 Data Analysis

M's journal notebook contained entries for a total of 36 days of classroom language learning activities. Two researchers (including the present author) read the journal entries carefully, identifying events and/or factors mentioned in M's diary. Then the number of times each factor was mentioned in the whole diary was computed. In counting the frequency of mention of each factor, whenever a factor was identified once or more than once in a single day's journal entry, its frequency of mention was computed as one. Thus, a frequency of 36 means that the factor appeared in every journal entry (100%). Then the identified factors were listed in order of frequency of mention in the diary. The two researchers did the analysis of the entries separately. When disagreements arose, they discussed their differences until agreement was reached.⁷

The analysis was supplemented by a questionnaire given to the diarist M before she left Japan for ESL training so that she could fill it out while taking language lessons in the U.S., when the details would still be fresh in her mind. The questionnaire was intended to elicit various kinds of information necessary for analysis of the diary data. It asked about M's past foreign language learning experience in Japan and abroad, and required detailed information about the classroom ESL lessons in the U.S. The completed questionnaire was returned to the researchers together with the notebook of journal entries.

Another supplement to the analysis was interviewing. For the purpose of obtaining a clearer picture of M's experience in the ESL classroom, an interview was conducted with M by the researchers, who did not observe her ESL classroom. Through this retrospective interview, a number of questions concerning the journal entries

ESL LEARNER'S DIARY

Table 1
Number and Percentage of Mentions of Factors
in M's Language Learning Diary
(36 Diary Entries over an 8-week period)

Entries	A. Learning activities	B. Emotional factors	C. Non-emotional factors
36 (100%)	Speaking		
26 (72%)	Listening		speaking
25 (69%)		<i>ambition / hope / expectation</i>	
24 (67%)			materials
22 (61%)			classmates
21 (58%)		<i>enjoyment / gladness / happiness</i>	
17 (47%)	Vocabulary		errors/failure; teacher activities
16 (44%)	Reading		comprehension
15 (42%)			easiness/difficulty
14 (39%)	Grammar		speed; time
13 (36%)	Games	<i>regret / disappointment</i>	
10 (28%)	Writing		progress/improvement; assignments
8 (22%)		<i>self-encouragement / self-reinforcement; boredom</i>	Japanese people; vocabulary
7 (19%)			guessing; success
6 (17%)		<i>competitiveness</i>	Japanese language; Japan; teacher's words; fluency
5 (14%)	Picture drawing	<i>dissatisfaction / disapproval</i>	effort; grammar; teaching method
4 (11%)			outgoingness/sociability; gestures; teacher's praise
3 (8%)	Pronunciation	<i>anxiety</i>	teacher attitudes; culture; cooperation; review
2 (6%)		<i>frustration / irritation; disturbance / annoyance; tension; confusion</i>	memorization; pronunciation; repetition; sex differences; goals; age
1 (3%)		<i>loneliness</i>	classroom observation; tests; education; environment; study abroad; family/friends; translation; variety

were answered. Moreover, M's thoughts and attitudes toward diary-keeping activities, information concerning her out-of-class contact with speakers of the target language, and her attitudes toward English-speaking people and their culture were obtained.⁸ Some of the questionnaire and interview information appears in section 2.1, and the author draws upon it in the comments and discussion which follow.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Factors Identified in M's Diary

As a result of the analysis of M's journal entries, a total of 65 factors were identified. Table 1 shows these factors listed in order of frequency of mention in her diary. In diary studies, it is important to note here, researchers generally assume that the more often a factor appears in the journal, the more important or influential it is in the diarist's language learning experience. The factors listed in Table 1 fall into three general groups: (a) learning activities in the ESL classroom; (b) emotional, psychological, or affective factors indicating the mental condition of the learner during or after the classroom language lessons; (c) non-emotional factors related to the program of study.

The list indicates several things concerning the three types of factors mentioned above. First of all, the informant-diarist's learning experience included nine types of learning activities (listed in order of frequency): speaking, listening, vocabulary, reading, grammar, games, writing, picture-drawing, and pronunciation (Table 1, column A, boldface). The notable high-frequency mention of two activities, speaking and listening, reflects the focus of M's ESL program. Second, the list includes 13 emotional or psychological factors involved in M's L2 classroom learning (arranged in order of frequency): from ambition/expectation/hope (the most frequent) to loneliness (the least frequent) (Table 1, column B, italics). These factors indicate the variety of M's emotional reactions toward her learning activities, teachers, classmates, and so on during the 8-week span of her ESL learning experience (cf. Rivers, 1983). Among the 13 factors identified, ambition/expectation/hope (69%) and

enjoyment/gladness/happiness (58%) are interesting to note. The comparatively frequent appearance of these factors in the journal, which might partly be attributable to M's extroverted or positive personality, leads us to speculate that these positive factors played an important role in encouraging the learner toward increased motivation and improvement in the TL.

Third, non-emotional or non-psychological variables make up the remaining 43 factors presented in Table 1 (column C, ordinary type). Nine of these non-emotional factors were quite prominent in the diarist's ESL learning experience: speaking (i.e., comments about her oral expression ability in English); materials (e.g., textbooks, handouts, pictures); classmates (i.e., other learners in the informant's ESL classroom); errors/failure; teacher activities in the classroom; comprehension of spoken messages in English; difficulty of learning activities; speed of speaking, writing, or reading; and time (e.g., length of time spent on a certain activity). The frequent occurrence in the journal of two ability-related factors, speaking (72%) and comprehension (44%), also identified by Rivers (1983), apparently relates to conversation-focused activities in M's classroom. Other important variables to note are those concerned with the classroom teacher (teacher activities, teacher's words, teaching method, teacher praise, and teacher attitudes). The total number (35) and combined percentages of mention (97%) of these factors indicate the influential role of the teacher in M's overall ESL learning experience. The factors related to Japan are also interesting. The total number (20) and percentages of mention (56%) of these variables seem to be explained by the multi-ethnic context of M's L2 learning experience. Learning ESL in a mixed-nationality classroom in the U.S. gave her many opportunities to think about her native language and country in comparison with other countries, languages, and people—opportunities unavailable in Japan's mono-ethnic ESL classrooms.

To sum up, in interpreting the frequency of mention of the three types of personal factors identified in M's diary (Table 1), we draw the following conclusions: (a) the diarist-learner M experienced various kinds of emotions or psychological reactions toward her learning experience in her conversation-centered ESL classroom; (b) the five most prominent non-emotional factors in M's classroom

experience (apart from the context-related factor of speaking) were *teacher, materials, classmates, Japan, and errors/failure.*

3.2 Personal Factors in M's Classroom ESL Learning

In the previous section, the three types of personal factors were discussed in quantitative terms (i.e., frequency of mention). The following section, using excerpts from the journal as illustrative data, discusses several of the individual learner variables which were found to be involved, in some important ways, in M's personal learning experience in the ESL classroom. The focus will be on the comparison of variables identified in this study with those discussed in past diary research. Attention will also be given to the interrelationships among the identified factors, especially the relationship between the emotional and non-emotional ones.

3.2.1 Teacher Praise

There are several journal entries which show that positive feedback from the teacher or teacher praise led to M's positive feelings, ambition for improvement, hopes or expectations of future success, and self-encouragement or self-reinforcement:

(1) *Journal entry—Week 4*

In the afternoon class we talked with our teacher about the previous weekend. I told him that I had enjoyed shopping in Montreal, Canada, and so on. We talked in English quite a lot. He praised me, saying, "Now you can speak much better than before. Great improvement!" How glad I was with his words! I would like to speak tomorrow as successfully as I did today.

(2) *Journal entry—Week 4*

In today's morning class the teacher said to us, "Each one of you has improved quite a lot." All of my classmates seemed pleased with his praise. Also in the afternoon class my listening teacher praised me, saying "Now you can catch a lot more words and sentences than before. Very good!" I think I will have to work harder for the remaining weeks; one month has already passed and another month remains.

These excerpts indicate that, consistent with the findings of Bailey's (1980) self-observational diary study in a French class-

room at UCLA, even a short utterance of teacher praise had a notable positive influence on M's L2 learning. This finding points to a positive correlation between teachers' positive feedback and learners' development in L2 proficiency, an aspect of classroom dynamics which merits detailed exploration. Moreover, classroom teachers should recognize the strong positive impact teacher praise makes upon L2 learners, an impact noted in past diary research as well.

3.2.2 Teaching Method

M's journal included several entries indicating her dissatisfaction with the teaching method or style used by the classroom teacher, such as the following, recorded in Week 4:

(3) Journal entry—Week 4

One of the graduate students told me that the teaching method our teacher used when they observed our class the other day was one of the current innovative methods. I have heard that it aims at leading students to learn English in the natural way, without the teaching of grammar at all. But I cannot agree with this method; I think it should include grammar teaching even if just a little bit. What we are learning now are mainly expressions we can readily use in everyday activities. I cannot help feeling this kind of method lacks substantiality or is somehow unreliable.

(4) Journal entry—Week 4

In the afternoon class we did association games. We enjoyed them, but used only simple English words. It was not difficult and nothing but play. After playing a lot today in the class, I wondered if this way of learning English was really effective. We usually play a lot in the classroom. I do not particularly dislike this method since my main purpose is to improve my ESL speaking ability, but I do doubt the effectiveness of continuous use of this type of play-centered learning activity. In Japan we don't usually have this kind of learning activity; I just feel I have learned very little or nothing at all in such a play-centered classroom.

Apparently the learner's unwillingness to accept the teaching method or her doubt about its effectiveness is due to a large gap between unfamiliar, innovative methods used by native teachers in

the target culture environment and the grammar-translation method she had been used to. M was dissatisfied with relatively uncontrolled or relaxation-oriented learning activities. This might be explained in part by the teaching style which has traditionally prevailed in Japan—lecture-type, predominantly teacher-fronted, lock step instruction with fewer opportunities for discussions or debates among learners. Her dissatisfaction might also have sociocultural roots: preference for relatively controlled, teacher-led classroom lessons might be characteristic of Japanese learners or of Asian L2 learners in general. Similarly, in some past diary research, quite strong dissatisfaction with teaching style was reported by SLA researchers-as-diarists learning in TL community environments. For instance, both Schumann & Schumann (1977) and Jones (1977) revealed the learners' strong rejection of strictly controlled, teacher-led, inflexible classroom lessons stressing precise memorization, imitation, and repetition, in a less-relaxed, less-autonomous classroom atmosphere. Given these findings, it seems very likely that it is relatively difficult for L2 learners to adapt themselves to unfamiliar methods of classroom instruction in the TL environment within a relatively short period of time. Further, the results of the diary studies discussed above appear to suggest an interesting contrast between L2 learners of two different nationalities: American learners' preference for less controlled lessons vs. Japanese learners' preference for more controlled, teacher-guided instruction.

3.2.3 *Classmates*

The *classmates* factor was found to be related to several other variables identified in this study. In some cases, the factor appeared with the emotional factor of *competitiveness*:

(5) *Journal entry—Week 3*

These days each of my classmates has come to speak more and much better than before. I have to make more effort to speak up in class. I don't want to be behind any of them!

(6) *Journal entry—Week 6*

We learned how to use comparative sentences in the morning class. It's vexing that I cannot make oral responses fluently. I can write

fairly easily, but I cannot speak in a fluent manner. After doing about 16 exercises, I thought Japanese students' oral responses are very slow compared to those made by students of other nationalities. For example, my classmates from Colombia answer very fluently, which makes me both extremely competitive and irritated. Tomorrow morning two of my classmates are leaving, so this will give me more chances to be called on by the teacher. I am determined to speak as much as possible in my class for the remaining weeks.

The two entries given above clearly support the view that a moderate competitive feeling on the part of learners will eventually lead them toward higher motivation and improved interlanguage performance. This positive or facilitating role of competitiveness in classroom L2 learning has also been noted by Bailey (1983, p. 97), especially in conjunction with the *anxiety* factor; her model suggests that moderate competitiveness caused by facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to study the TL harder and leads to an improved, successful self-image. In some other cases, M mentioned cooperation when referring to classmates:

(7) *Journal entry—Week 2*

I often cooperate with a 21-year-old girl from Canada to finish classroom exercises; we are becoming good friends. We sometimes ask questions of each other about the content in a low voice and sometimes have fun during the classroom lesson. She also helps me a lot, pointing out my wrong pronunciation, telling me how to shape my lips for correct pronunciation, and so on. I like this kind of cooperative classroom atmosphere, and I feel I will be able to learn more through friendly cooperation with my classmates.

There are other cases where the mention of classmates occurred with the emotional factor of disturbance:

(8) *Journal entry—Week 5*

Today's lessons were not very interesting to me. An old man and an old woman from Colombia, who have just enrolled in our class, are really disturbing. They often slow down the speed of our conversation lessons, and they aggressively try to answer questions even when they are not called on by the teacher. Sometimes they even say

things that are incomprehensible or irrelevant to the lesson content. This is extremely annoying to me! I often feel we are disturbed in our learning activities by these new students.

In still other cases, M indicated pleasure at being the only Japanese student in her class and her happiness or satisfaction with a smaller number of classmates:

(9) *Journal entry—Week 1*

My classmates are from different countries — France, Canada, Vietnam, Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. This leaves me no opportunities to speak Japanese in the classroom; I am forced to speak English when I communicate with them. I am so glad that I am the only Japanese student in my class.

(10) *Journal entry —Week 8*

I am pleased with this kind of small class because it gives me more opportunities to be called on by the teacher to speak in the classroom and to talk with him individually. Because of the small class, it seems, we have come to be able to learn more satisfactorily, but I feel a little lonely at the same time.

Bailey (1980) stresses the importance of positive social climate in the classroom as one of the major contributors to her perceived successful L2 learning. She notes that in her classroom language learning experience she became more motivated toward classroom learning with the improvement of her social relations with classmates. Similarly, M's positive attitudes toward learning in a friendly, cooperative atmosphere clearly indicate that M perceived cooperation with her classmates (i.e., positive affective classroom climate) as mutually beneficial.

The research findings indicate that both learners' competitive feelings and positive, cooperative relations with other learners in the classroom contribute to achievements in the TL. However, the degrees of these two factors must not be extreme but moderate. The extremely competitive classroom may hinder learning because it arouses learner anxiety, while an extremely cooperative or supportive classroom climate may discourage learners from wishing to

appear to surpass their peers in TL proficiency. It may be arguable that classroom L2 learners need a balance of competition and cooperation for optimal L2 development.

The *classmates* factor, which was shown to appear frequently in the journal, plays a significant role in the L2 learning process through interacting with a variety of both emotional and non-emotional factors. The importance of this social factor in the SLA process is worth re-emphasizing here.⁹

Evidently, the processes of classroom language learning will be strongly influenced both by the teacher and the other learners. Past SLA research has tended to focus on the relationship or interaction between the teacher and learners rather than on the relationship among learners. The findings of this study suggest that more careful attention must be directed toward investigations into the learner-learner relationship.

3.2.4 Anxiety

M's journal entries mention overt anxiety only three times, in Weeks 1, 4, and 5:

(11) *Journal entry — Week 1*

I think I will have difficulty understanding English sentences for the time being, at least until I get used to hearing actual spoken English. Now I am a little anxious, but I hope things will get better in about a week.

(12) *Journal entry — Week 4*

It is almost one month since I began to study English here. I am anxious, wondering if my English has improved or not during the past month. I will surely feel sad if I go back to Japan with little or no improvement or progress after finishing my ESL training here in the U.S.

(13) *Journal entry — Week 5*

For the past few days I guess I have been experiencing a kind of slump. I am so anxious about my speaking ability and I don't know what to do. I have tried to encourage myself to work harder, but things do not work out to my satisfaction; I am so frustrated and irritated!

The journal entries presented above indicate that M's anxiety was concerned with awareness of her low proficiency in ESL listening comprehension (Week 1) or oral production (Week 5), and her reflection on the degree of past improvement or her anticipation of eventual attainment in her ESL proficiency (Week 4). Unlike Bailey's (1983) self-observational diary research, wherein the learner's greatest anxiety occurred at the very beginning of the program and showed a gradual decrease as the learner's proficiency became higher than her language learning peers', the level of M's classroom anxiety was rather low at the beginning, perhaps because of her optimistic personality, and gradually became higher as time progressed. It reached a peak right after the middle of the 8-week program when she suffered from rather severe frustration because of an unexpected slump she encountered in the learning process.

Furthermore, also different from Bailey's (1983) findings, comments about anxiety in M's journal did not coincide with references to competitiveness, although the *frustration / irritation* factor, which might covertly have involved the feeling of anxiety, appeared with manifestations of competitiveness, as shown in journal entry (6) in the previous section. With regard to the manifestation patterns of anxiety in the SLA process, the findings of Bailey's (1983) research and those of this study lend support to the idea of learner variability, as has been commonly postulated in past diary research studies (e.g., Bailey, 1983; Brown, 1983; Schumann & Schumann, 1977).

3.2.5 Success vs. Failure

M's journal contained a total of 17 references to her failure or errors in the classroom. Mention of failure was concerned with her listening and speaking ability in ESL: failure to comprehend or understand the class content or the teacher's quickly spoken messages; failure to make quick oral responses to the teacher's questions; failure to speak smoothly or fluently; and failure to express her intended messages in the TL. On the other hand, there were seven references to classroom success in M's diary. All of these were also related to her comprehension and production of oral messages in ESL: success in comprehending the lesson content or the teacher's or classmates' spoken messages; success during in-class conversational work; and success in making herself under-

stood in English.

In most cases, the two factors of *success* and *enjoyment/ gladness/happiness* appeared together, as did the *failure* and *regret/disappointment* factors, as the following journal excerpt illustrates:

(14) *Journal entry—Week 3*

In the morning class we did exercises in pairs. One of the students read the questions in the text (e.g., Do you have a boyfriend?) and the other answered them, followed by a change of their roles. Although some of my sentences were not grammatical, I could make myself understood, and I could also understand what my partner told me; I was very, very glad about this. In the afternoon class we played a bingo game. This was our second time to play this game, so it was a bit boring. It was a great pity to me that my teacher could not understand what I said to him during the lesson. I will feel sad if I cannot make myself understood next time.

In some cases, M's apparent failure in ESL listening comprehension and oral production led her to realize her low-level conversational ability, which in turn increased her motivation to take part in L2 use both in and out of the class:

(15) *Journal entry—Week 4*

The afternoon class has been increasingly difficult since last week. Today I could understand almost nothing of the content, and could answer almost none of the teacher's questions, either. This made me realize strongly that I still have only an elementary-level listening ability. I borrowed some books from my teacher so that I could do additional study with them outside the classroom.

There are other cases in the journal in which M's success made her think of possible reasons for her achievement and the possible failure which could have resulted instead:

(16) *Journal entry—Week 6*

In the afternoon class we watched a video showing several different ways of walking. I could understand most of the content since we were provided with handouts explaining important words and phrases before watching the video. But without the help of those

handouts, I could have understood almost none of the content, I'm sure! I felt really sad thinking about how poor my listening comprehension ability is, even after staying here for more than one month.

Bailey (1980) found that her own journal included repeated mention of her pleasure at success in her French classroom, which increased her motivation and enthusiasm for learning the TL. It is usually the case that the learner's apparent classroom failures or errors evoke the feeling of regret or disappointment while successful classroom performance is related to happy feelings, greater motivation, and enthusiasm for the language. However, as the two journal excerpts shown above indicate, these learner variables are interrelated in a more complicated manner than is usually assumed. That is, the entries suggest that there can be cases in the learning process where the learner's perception of failure will have a positive influence on learning while classroom success will ultimately affect the learner negatively. If so, classroom failure need not be regarded as an absolutely negative factor and success as a completely positive one. Both success and failure have the possibility of exerting a positive or a negative influence, depending on the situation in the learning process as well as on the learner's personality.

3.2.6 *Progress/Improvement*

A total of 10 references to *progress/improvement* were identified. They were concerned with several aspects of the learner's L2 achievements: the amount of comprehension and production of spoken English; the speed with which M finished in-class exercises, spoke, or understood the teacher's spoken messages; the fluency and flexibility of her oral production in the class; and the general quality of her language performance.

In some cases, M's awareness of her own improvement in English led not only to her expectation or hope for further success and improvement but also to self-encouragement as well as determination to work harder in order to achieve further progress. The following journal entry shows this:

(17) *Journal entry—Week 3*

I spoke a lot today in the class. It seems I have become used to

hearing spoken English. Also, I have been more able to speak in the classroom than before. I am beginning to feel that my English will have improved a lot by the time I finish my study here and go back to Japan. Whenever my classmates and teacher understand my English, I feel very happy and satisfied, which leads me to expect I will be able to speak better and more tomorrow than today in the classroom. I am determined to do my best so that I will be able to do much better tomorrow.

Several journal entries indicate that classroom instruction had positive effects on M's process of L2 learning, particularly in her oral communicative competence. In the following excerpt she attributes progress in this area mostly to formal classroom instruction during the 8-week intensive ESL program:

(18) *Journal entry—Week 8*

At the beginning of the course I could hardly speak or listen, but I feel I have gradually become used to real spoken English. Now I can say with confidence that my oral English has greatly improved during the past two months! I'm satisfied not only with the class but also with the teachers I had at this center. My teachers always showed warm attitudes toward me, trying to listen to me and understand my broken English. Also they have been helpful, kind, and patient enough to try to figure out what I was getting at every time I talked with them in English.

In discussing the effects of instruction on learning, one of the major controversial issues in classroom-centered research (cf. Long, 1983), we must take into account that M had formal L2 training in an acquisition-rich environment. That is, M combined intensive classroom ESL instruction with out-of-class interaction with native speakers (usually her teachers, dormitory students, and shop clerks). Thus we cannot state the precise weight the variables instruction and exposure had upon M's L2 development. However, given the limited amount of interactive exposure to the TL (reported in the retrospective questionnaire and interview), and the journal excerpts quoted immediately above, it appears reasonable to assume that classroom instruction played a major role in the advancement of M's general conversational abilities in the TL (as evidenced by the improvement in her aural comprehen-

sion noted in section 2.1). If so, the findings are in accord with Schmidt and Frota's (1986) case study of the development of conversational ability in Portuguese.

3.3 Language Learning Diary: A Means of Self-Reflection

Both in personal interviews and in her responses to questionnaire items, the informant-diarist M showed an extremely positive attitude toward the diary-keeping she did during the 8-week intensive ESL training program. M reported that the diary helped her reflect upon her past classroom L2 learning experience and achievement. M's diary contained a number of entries showing that the act of diary-keeping functioned as an instrument for self-awareness, self-analysis, self-evaluation, or self-reflection—characteristics which have been indicated in several past studies (e.g. Bailey, 1983; Foss & Beitzel, 1988; Grandcolas & Soule-Susbielles, 1986; Lowe, 1987; Matsumoto, 1987; Sternglass & Pugh, 1986).

For example, the following Week 2 journal entry shows that M is, in retrospect, analyzing the steps involved in listening, and considering reasons for her own frequent failures in comprehending fast-spoken sentences in the TL:

(19) Journal entry—Week 2

In the afternoon listening class we were taught how to pronounce English sentences (e.g., What did you say?) at the speed which is usually used by native English speakers in everyday activities. I really cannot understand them if spoken fast. Two or three words come together and are pronounced just like one word! It's almost totally impossible to comprehend such sentences! Though important words are pronounced rather strongly, I cannot catch them if spoken fast. When I cannot understand a word in a sentence, I often take time to think about its meaning, and finally the whole sentence becomes totally incomprehensible to me. I often experience failure to understand English sentences in this way.

Another excerpt from M's Week 2 journal indicates that the learner is evaluating her own conversational ability in ESL, especially in comparison with her classmates' class performance. M is aware of her own low-level proficiency, and considers how to make faster progress in oral communicative competence:

(20) Journal entry—Week 2

I am sorry to say that I am now the worst speaker of English in the entire class. I can answer the teacher's questions fairly quickly in my mind, but I cannot make quick oral responses to them. I can't understand what the teacher says if he speaks quickly, either. I want to be able to speak and express myself better as soon as possible. How will I learn to make oral responses quickly? Only by accustoming myself to such exercises? If so, I am eager to get used to them! And I want to talk to as many Americans as possible in English! But the fact that I can only use a limited number of sentences of the same pattern in conversation makes me frustrated!

One more entry, recorded in Week 4, illustrates M's use of journal-keeping for self-analysis and self-evaluation. She considers her past classroom achievements and improvements in L2 conversational proficiency in terms of the speed, fluency, quantity, and flexibility of her classroom interlanguage talk:

(21) Journal entry—Week 4

We did conversational exercises today. I think I have come to speak faster than before. So far I could speak only intermittently, but today I felt I could speak more continuously or fluently. These days, I think, the amount of my talk in the classroom has gradually been increasing. I feel very happy about this. I have just begun to talk with my classmates in English more freely, although the topics of our talk are still limited to simple or trifling things.

Thus, through the act of writing down classroom events, personal comments, and feelings in the journal, the diarist-learner M was led to analyze her own achievements and problems in the learning process, organize thoughts which might otherwise have remained largely obscure or unconscious, and discover ways for progress and success in subsequent L2 performance. The present author believes that the journal-keeping period for L2 learners is a generative, heuristic stage, and a time of free and spontaneous self-exploration. Furthermore, diary-keeping enables learners to be more conscious of classroom L2 learning and teaching.¹⁰ It also stimulates more concentrated contemplation than other means, such as simply thinking or talking.

Such a diary, however, must be assigned to students. Learners (with the exception of classroom researchers) probably would not voluntarily spend time on such deliberate introspection of their own learning experience. Moreover, as the journal excerpts above indicate, the act of diary-keeping makes diarist-learners alert to learning strategies, both their own and ones which may enable them to meet personal educational goals—cognitive or metacognitive operations which are likely to assist them in the development of TL competence (cf. Rubin & Henze, 1981).

In sum, the discussion presented above seems to support the claim that diary-keeping is positively associated with success in classroom language learning. Classroom teachers are encouraged to introduce diary-keeping to their students as a useful self-teaching device, an out-of-class activity which has considerable potential for promoting the development of L2 skills.

4. Summary and Conclusion

This descriptive, analytical diary study of the L2 learning process of the Japanese college-level ESL learner M during an 8-week intensive classroom training program in the TL culture addressed two research questions: (a) What factors were most significant in M's classroom L2 learning process? and (b) How did diary-keeping influence M's L2 learning? The exploration of personal variables revealed that a total of 65 personal factors—13 emotional and 43 non-emotional—were involved in M's L2 learning process. Most outstanding is the importance M attached to speaking and listening (see Table 1). While the communicative focus of the course certainly affected their prominence, this aspect of her diary merits further exploration. Discounting mention of classroom activities, the factors most influential in M's L2 learning process were the highly positive emotional ones of *ambition/expectation/hope* and *enjoyment/gladness/happiness*, the non-emotional instructional factors of *teacher* and *materials*, the social variable of *classmates*, and factors related to the informant's native country and native language.

The qualitative analysis revealed both similarities with and differences from past diary studies. Similarities were the positive effects of teacher praise on learner motivation; dissatisfaction with teaching methods used in the target culture environment; the learner's perception of affective classroom climate as a significantly influential variable in the learning process; and the role of competitiveness in the classroom L2 learning process. A major difference was found in the manifestation patterns of the two affective factors of *competitiveness* and *anxiety*.

The analysis also contributed insights into the roles of several learner variables in the SLA process such as the performance-related factors of *success* and *failure* in the classroom, the learner's progress in TL proficiency, and, most importantly, the influence of the other learners upon classroom L2 learning. Furthermore, mention has been made of the possible positive relationship between teacher praise and learning outcomes; the possible relationship between learner background (or ethnicity) and preference for teaching style; the need for a balance of competition and cooperation among classroom learners; the influence of the learner's perceptions of personal classroom success or failure on L2 learning; and the major role of classroom instruction in promoting L2 development. Moreover, this diary study, in exploring personal variables, especially affective factors involved in M's L2 learning, provided further insights into psychological conditions which stimulate learner motivation: (a) happy, glad, satisfied feelings arising from positive feedback from the teacher, or from perceived success; and (b) competitive feelings resulting from perceived classroom failure or classmates' progress or success in the classroom. It has also become clear that positive attitudes toward teachers, peers, native speakers of English, and the target culture played a significant role in increasing the learner's self-perceived motivation toward classroom ESL learning.

As for the second research question, diary-keeping was found to promote self-awareness, self-evaluation, and self-analysis during M's learning process. It appears that, by and large, most of the benefits of journal-keeping rest on those of the act of writing itself. The activity is strongly recommended as a useful way of raising the diarist-learner's consciousness of language learning and stimulat-

ing deliberate introspection of past classroom learning experiences.

However, we must question whether findings that relate to a single informant may be generalized. Some of the findings may be idiosyncratic to this learner; others may be generalizable only to other adult Japanese ESL learners. Another conceivable drawback of this study is the fact that M's diary tended to focus on classroom learning activities, which made up the majority of references in the journal. Moreover, M's journal notes were neither long enough nor detailed enough to establish precise hypotheses about adult L2 learning, in contrast to Schmidt & Frota's (1986) research. In order to identify regularities of events and consistent patterns in learner diaries, a longitudinal study of more than two months is needed.

An important advantage of this diary study, on the other hand, is that the diarist-learner was not an SLA researcher, as in many past studies (e.g., Bailey, 1980; Jones, 1977; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; and Schumann & Schumann, 1977). It seems, in this respect, that M's journal entries reflect relatively naive perceptions and observations of her classroom learning experience.¹¹ Thus, M's journal appears to provide findings much more generalizable to other ordinary adult ESL learners.

The findings of the present study show that language learning is a complex activity involving a wide variety of both emotional and non-emotional variables, even within a single learner. These are closely and complexly intertwined with one another. They sometimes facilitate and sometimes hinder the learning process. The diversity of variables involved and the complicated relationship among the factors seen here show that the L2 classroom is extremely complex—an amalgam of diverse subjective views, ideas, emotions, preferences, and perceptions of learners who make up the social gathering of the language classroom (cf. Breen, 1985). So far relatively few SLA researchers have investigated the classroom learning process in detail. The literature provides few descriptive, analytical accounts of individual learners' classroom experiences on the lines of the present study. Future classroom-based research on L2 learning and teaching should direct much more attention to detailed descriptions of classroom proceedings, which, ideally,

should focus not only on overt, observable, physical dimensions, but also on covert, unobservable, psychological dimensions of the learning process.

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Notes

1. Chaudron (1988, pp. 13-49) discusses four major methodological approaches to L2 classroom research: psychometric evaluation, interaction analysis, discourse analysis, and ethnography. Allwright (1988, pp. 242-258) provides a useful historical review of methodologies employed in classroom research over the past two decades, which includes discussion of the recent shift of interest toward "subjective," "unobservable," "unscientific," "qualitative" SLA data. Also see van Lier (1988) and Watson-Gegeo (1988) for detailed discussion of classroom ethnography.
2. The importance of affective factors in the SLA process has been stressed especially by Schumann (1975), who argues that difficulties in adult SLA can largely be accounted for by social and psychological constraints placed on the language learning process. He claims that affective variables such as attitudes, motivation, and the personality trait of empathy are the initiating, controlling factors which will cause the cognitive processes either to function, producing language acquisition, or to fail.
3. The terms *introspective* and *non-introspective*, distinguished here as well as in Matsumoto (1987, pp. 30-31), are given to analyses, not to data (cf. Fry's comment, 1988, p. 159). In both types of diary studies, the data themselves are not only introspective but retrospective in the sense that they are the self-observational reports of the diarist's own past learning experience. To date,

there is little consensus among researchers as to the usage of these terms. The term *introspection*, however, has generally been used in the literature as a cover term referring collectively to different types of verbal reporting, including thinking-aloud and retrospection (cf. Faerch & Kasper, 1987).

4. For a detailed review of past diary studies, see Matsumoto (1987).
5. According to Grotjahn's (1987, pp. 59-60) methodological paradigms, the present study does not follow a pure exploratory-interpretative research paradigm because it involves both qualitative and quantitative data.
6. The term *informant* is used in this paper in contrast to the subject of a controlled experiment.
7. In the great majority of cases, the informant mentions particular factors only once in a single day's entry. Also, the two researchers achieved a high degree of agreement in their interpretations of the diary entries.
8. As has been emphasized by Matsumoto (1987, p. 31), supplementary questionnaires and interviews are important in non-introspective diary studies like the present one, where the analysis of the journal is based on inferences by the researchers, not on direct introspection by the diarist himself/herself. To obtain more accurate, detailed information of the diarist's process of classroom L2 learning, and, therefore, to make the journal data and analysis more precise, these additional qualitative techniques were employed in this study.
9. Breen (1985) claims that it is incumbent upon classroom-based L2 research to adequately account for the underlying social psychological forces which generate classroom discourse and also for their possible socio-cognitive effects, which have largely been neglected in our current investigations into classroom language learning. Breen, perceiving the language classroom as "a particular social context for the intensification of the cultural experience of learning" (p. 154), proposes "the interplay between the individual, the individual as group member, and the group which represents and generates the social and psychological nexus" (p. 149) as the culture of the language classroom. According to him, the culture of the language classroom has eight essential features: it is interactive; individually differentiated; collective; highly normative; asymmetrical; inherently conservative; jointly constructed; and immediately significant. Speaking for a long-neglected social view of classroom language learning, Breen emphasizes overall that the study of the process of language learning that occurs within a social context of classroom interaction necessitates the adoption of a holistic, anthropological approach to research which particularly regards psychological and social dimensions of learning not as distinctive but as irrevocably interrelated.

10. One study which demonstrated a close relationship between learner awareness and success in classroom L2 learning is Gillette's (1987). This introspective analysis of classroom behaviors of two successful learners of French revealed that they were both aware of and in full control of their own L2 learning process. Also Wenden (1987) stresses the important role of learner awareness in promoting self-directed autonomous learning, which has been an ultimate educational goal of learner strategy research.
11. Schmidt & Frota (1986) refer to possible experimenter biases when a diary is kept by a professional applied linguist interested in SLA theory.

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