




Decreasing Foreign Language Anxiety through Virtual Exchange

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Successful second language (L2) acquisition necessitates authentic learning environments that facilitate L2 input and interactions with native speakers.

(Collentine 2009; VanPatten 2015)





How can experiential learning be provided in the (online) language classroom?





LinguaMeeting

**Virtual Exchange in
Language Classrooms**



TALKABROAD

VE provides students the following benefits:

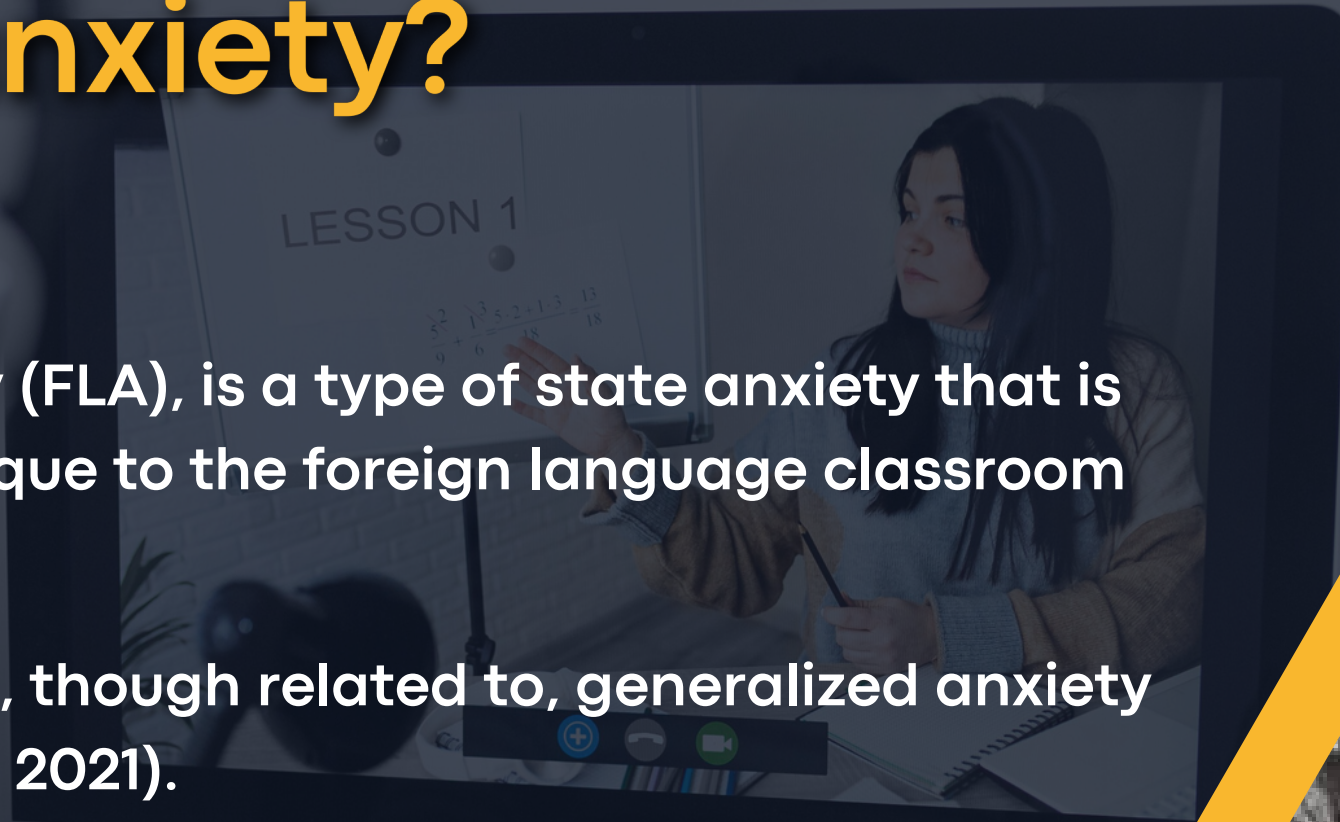
- Increased social interaction, flexibility, and opportunities to connect with people internationally (O'Dowd, 2018)
- Improve students' language skills and cultural knowledge as well as reducing student feelings of isolation (Marull & Kumar, 2020)
- Increased International Communication and International Critical Thinking Skills (Marull & Risner, 2022)





But what about student anxiety?

- Foreign language anxiety (FLA), is a type of state anxiety that is situation-specific, i.e. unique to the foreign language classroom (MacIntyre, 2017).
- FLA is independent from, though related to, generalized anxiety (Kirk, Grinstead, & Nibert, 2021).
- General anxiety has increased among college students (Bamber & Kraenzle Schneider, 2016; Beiter et al., 2015), but FLA has not (Kirk, Grinstead, & Nibert, 2021).
- FLA has been shown to negatively affect second language achievement, as measured by course grades, test grades, etc. (Teimouri et al., 2019) .
- FLA has been argued to be both a cause and consequence of language learning difficulty (MacIntyre, 2017).
- FLA has differential effects on Linguistic subdomains (Kirk, Grinstead, & Nibert, 2021).

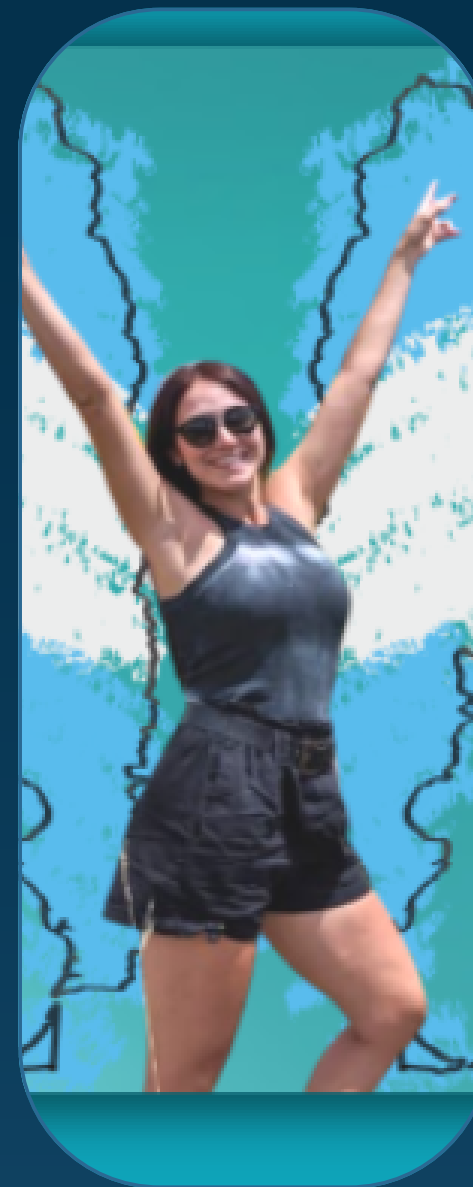


Performative Arts and Mental Health

Rocaglia (2021)

Sharing a collective space in the making, participating, engaging in an art based task, whether that is in the form of storytelling, poetry, dance or visual arts offers the following benefits:

- An exploration of our own (and others) values and belief systems
- Better understanding of others' perspectives
- A process of discovery, self-growth, enrichment and fulfilment
- Increased social connections, interactions and positive social experiences.
- Nurtured sense of belonging
- Prevention of physical and psychological ill health (short and long term)
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Greater solace and fortitude, drive and motivation





The Study

RESEARCH QUESTION

- How does cultural engagement via Virtuale Exchange relate to FLA levels?
- How do students perceive the effect of virtual exchange on their anxiety levels?

The Study

THE METHOD

- Participants (N=281)
 - Courses: Beginner Spanish I and II (Online)
 - Semesters: Spring, Summer, Fall (2022)
- Treatments
 - Weekly coaching sessions (10-12)
 - Participation in "Experiences" (3+)
- Instruments for data collection
 - Modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986)
 - Student reflections



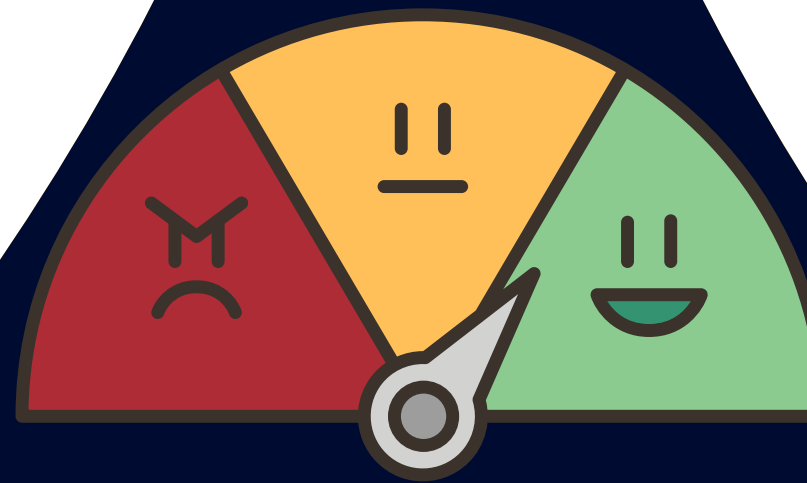
Participants

- 281 student responses (after data cleaning)
- Large research institution
- Enrolled in Beginner Spanish I or II (online)

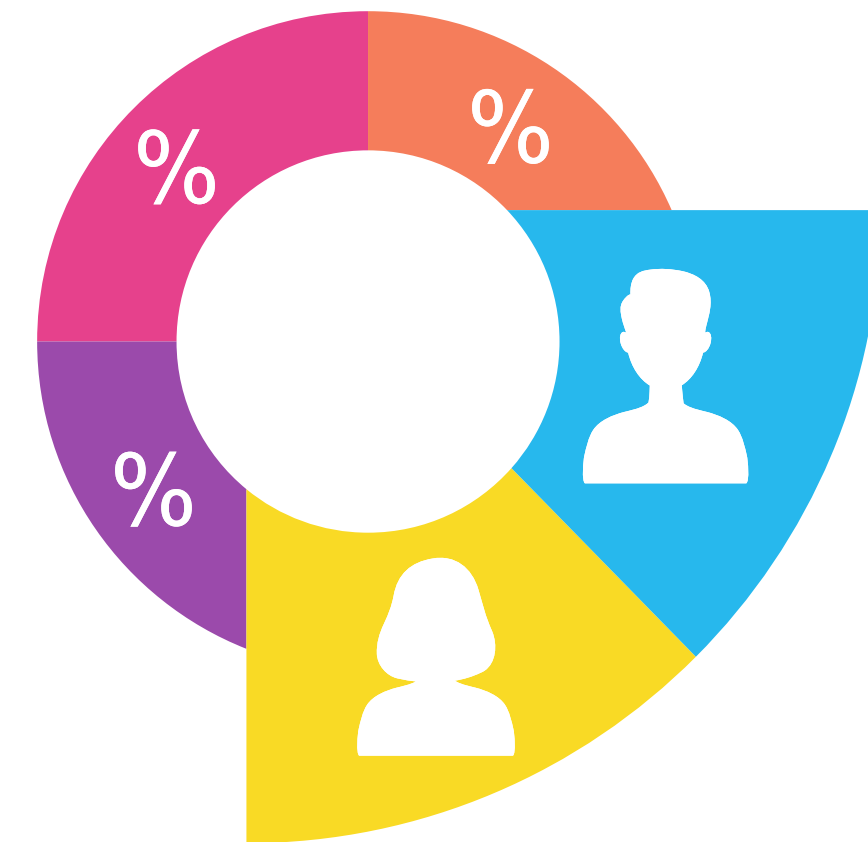


Demographics

- Primarily white
- Majority female
- Majority seniors with some juniors
- Primarily with majors in: social sciences followed by math/computer sciences and life sciences.
- Minimal international experience outside the course



**Student Feedback
Experiencias**



Coaching Sessions Samples



A screenshot of a video call interface. The window has a pink header with window control icons (close, maximize, minimize). The main area shows four video thumbnails in a 2x2 grid. The top-left thumbnail shows a collage of food dishes with the name 'Maria Centeno' below it. The top-right thumbnail shows a woman with glasses and a black top, with a yellow laughing emoji above her. The bottom-left thumbnail shows a woman with long dark hair and a green top, with a yellow surprised emoji above her. The bottom-right thumbnail shows a woman with long blonde hair and a grey top, with a yellow surprised emoji above her. The bottom of the window has a white bar with a left arrow, a 'LinguaMeeting' logo, and a right arrow.



EXPERIENCIAS

A BIKE RIDE
THROUGH
CALI



COME WITH ME
TO THE
LAND OF MATE



LinguaMeeting
EXPERIENCES
LEARN • EXPLORE • IMAGINE
[Click here to see samples](#)

CHOCO FACTORY TOUR
IN ECUADOR



PERU
IS MORE THAN
MACHU PICCHI



FROM BUENOS AIRES
UNTIL THE END
OF THE WORLD



CHOCO FACTORY TOUR
IN ECUADOR

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EXPERIENCES

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Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

TAKE SURVEY



Please answer the following questions by providing the number correspondent to the option that best describe your opinion.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.



Student Reflection

Reflection Activity

- Answer these questions below in the space provided. Please write in Spanish with complete sentences.
 - 1. ¿Cómo se llama la experiencia?
 - 2. ¿En qué país ocurre la experiencia?
 - 3. ¿Conoces a alguien de este país?
 - 4. ¿Cuáles son algunas palabras nuevas que aprendiste? Escribe 3 frases incorporando el vocabulario nuevo (una frase por palabra nueva).
 - 5. (In English) Write a short essay about the experience following these guidelines:
 - Paragraph 1 - Summarize the experience (i.e., What was the topic? How was the experience presented? What was the sequence?)
 - Paragraph 2 - Describe your main takeaways from the experience. (i.e., What did you learn? What surprised you? Do you have any personal connection to this topic? What did you like/dislike about it? How do you think you as a person and as a language student benefit from this experience?).
 - Paragraph 3 - Comments specifically on how these experiences influence your anxiety levels with using the Spanish Language (positively or negatively). Be as specific as possible and highlight which elements of the experiences, in your opinion, most impact your anxiety.
 - Paragraph 4 - Offer feedback/suggestions on the structure of this event and future events (i.e., What did or didn't work? What would you like to see more of? How would you do it differently? What future topics would you like to see?)
 - Paragraph 5 (optional) - Anything else you would like to add/share.

Completed after each
Experience
(min. 3 / max. 6)

Student Reflection

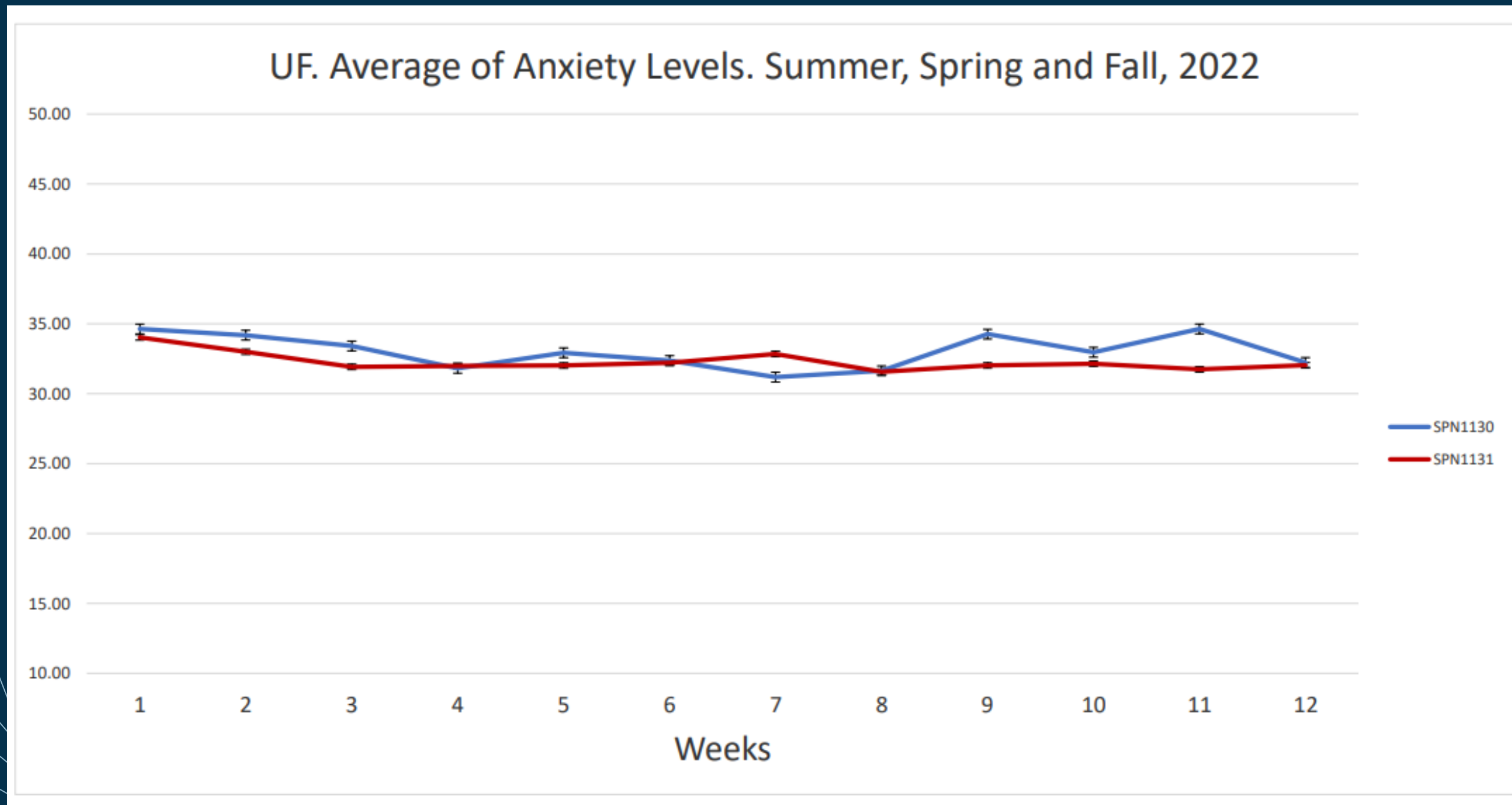
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With the semester now more than half over, I can see how these Experiences have helped me, albeit perhaps in less tangible ways. By that, I mean that developing an enhanced understanding of the cultural identities of various Spanish-speaking countries has given me a greater appreciation of the language and the people to make this class more than just learning the tactics of a second language. **The key to reducing my anxiety has been to remind myself that these events have a low threshold for interaction and there is no pressure to speak. For this event, I reviewed the recommended vocabulary sheet in advance, which also helped reduce anxiety and allowed me to recognize new words,** like hornear, personas difuntas, and ajonjolí, during the Experience. Another thing that helped **reduce my anxiety was to try to write down some of the exact phrases that Rolando used when I did not understand what he was saying. Then, after the Experience, I looked up those words in my dictionary to help fill in some of the understanding gaps. Knowing that I could do this afterward, without it impacting a participation grade, also helped reduce my anxiety.**

”

The Study

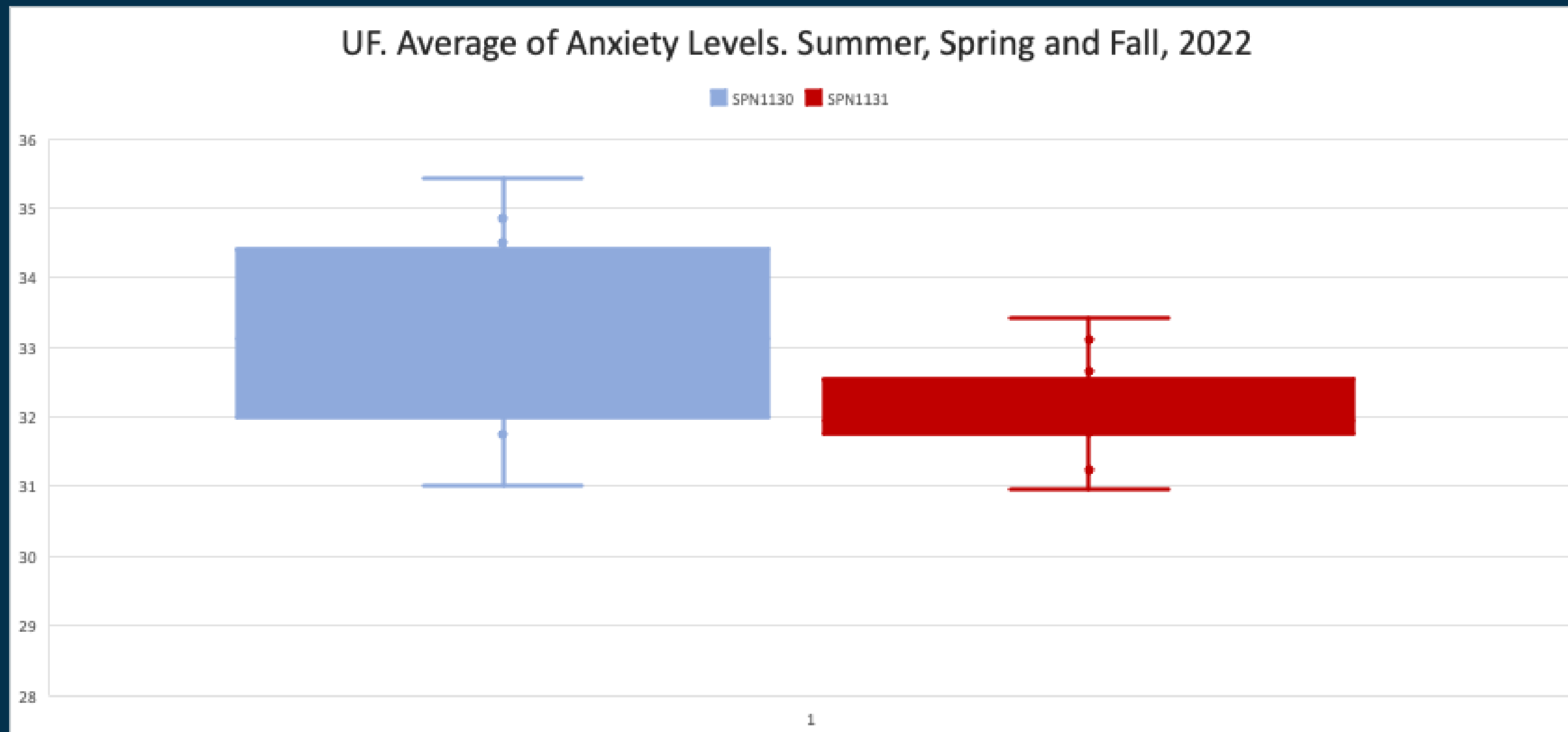
RESULTS - QUANTITATIVE



Week	SPN1130	SPN1131	Grand Total
1			
Avg.	34.63	34.03	34.34
Max.	48	45	48
Min.	13	21	13
SD	6.06	5.90	5.98
2			
Avg.	34.18	33.00	33.57
Max.	46	45	46
Min.	23	20	20
SD	5.65	6.30	6.01
3			
Avg.	33.42	31.92	32.72
Max.	44	46	46
Min.	17	18	17
SD	5.64	6.34	6.00
4			
Avg.	31.82	31.99	31.91
Max.	44	46	46
Min.	17	14	14
SD	6.64	6.47	6.53
5			
Avg.	32.93	32.02	32.48
Max.	46	44	46
Min.	17	22	17
SD	6.76	5.66	6.22
6			
Avg.	32.37	32.21	32.28
Max.	44	50	50
Min.	17	19	17
SD	6.40	6.08	6.20
7			
Avg.	31.19	32.84	32.08
Max.	43	50	50
Min.	15	16	15
SD	6.36	7.23	6.86
8			
Avg.	31.64	31.57	31.61
Max.	44	47	47
Min.	14	20	14
SD	6.88	6.01	6.43
9			
Avg.	34.26	32.02	32.83
Max.	43	42	43
Min.	19	14	14
SD	5.71	6.16	6.06
10			
Avg.	32.96	32.15	32.42
Max.	40	45	45
Min.	24	19	19
SD	4.63	6.36	5.81
11			
Avg.	34.63	31.75	32.81
Max.	46	44	46
Min.	22	17	17
SD	5.93	6.65	6.51
12			
Avg.	32.24	32.03	32.12
Max.	42	46	46
Min.	23	21	21
SD	5.49	5.95	5.71
Total Avg.	33.17	32.47	32.80
Total Max.	48	50	50
Total Min.	13	14	13
Total SD	6.20	6.27	6.24

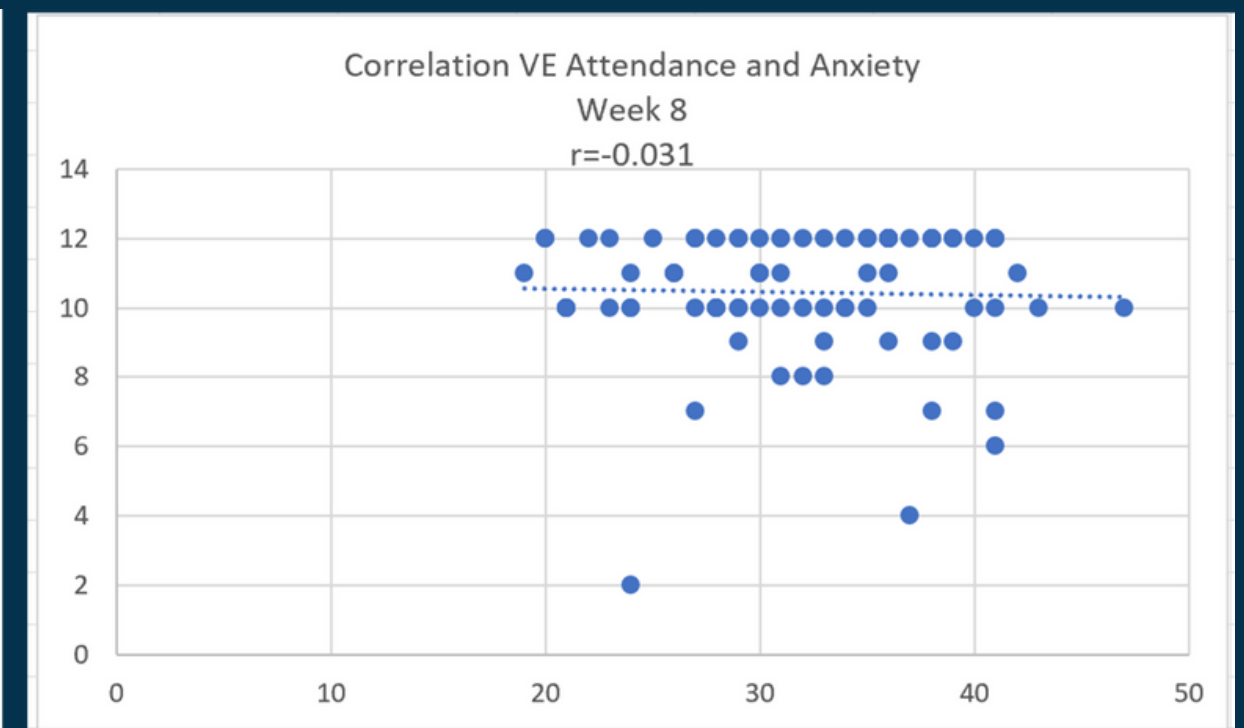
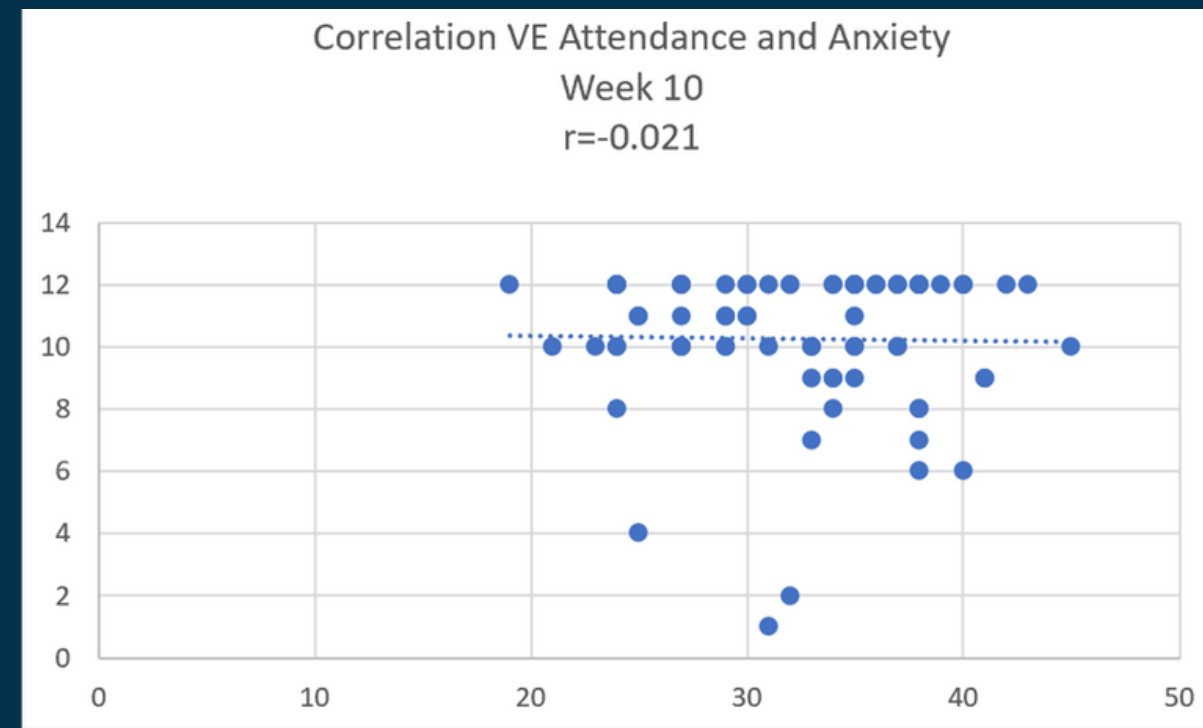
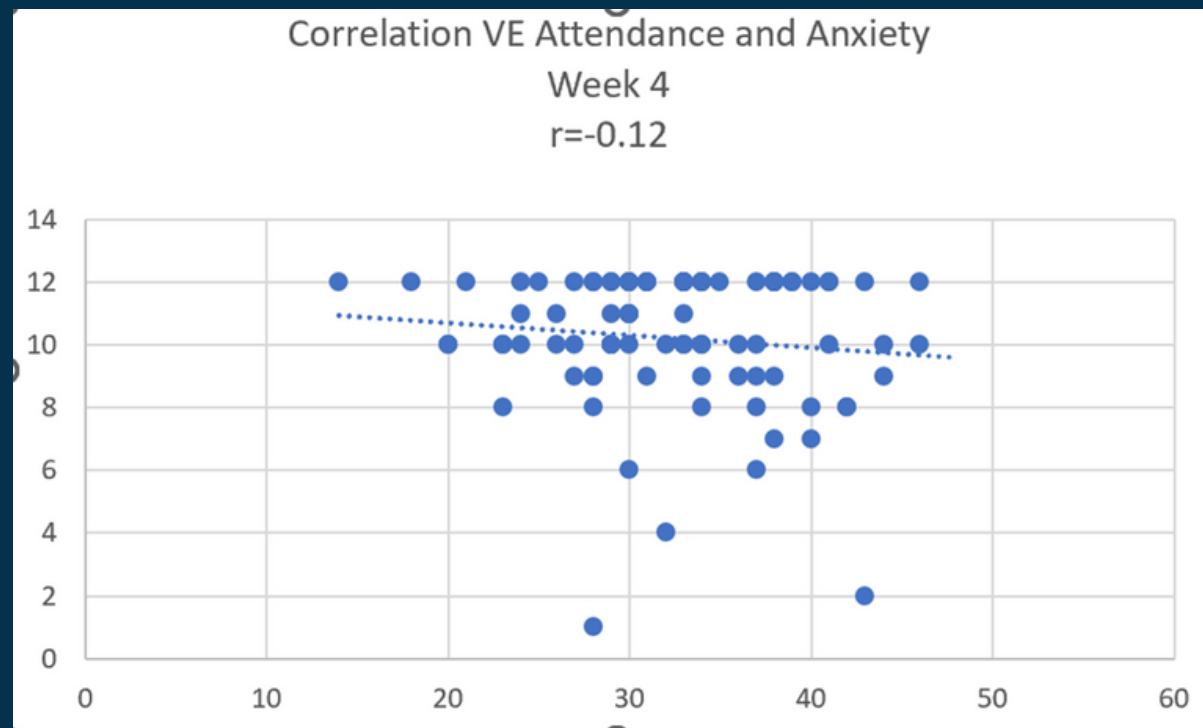
The Study

RESULTS - QUANTITATIVE



The Study

RESULTS - QUANTITATIVE



A weak negative correlation that decreases over time.

The Study

RESULTS - QUALITATIVE

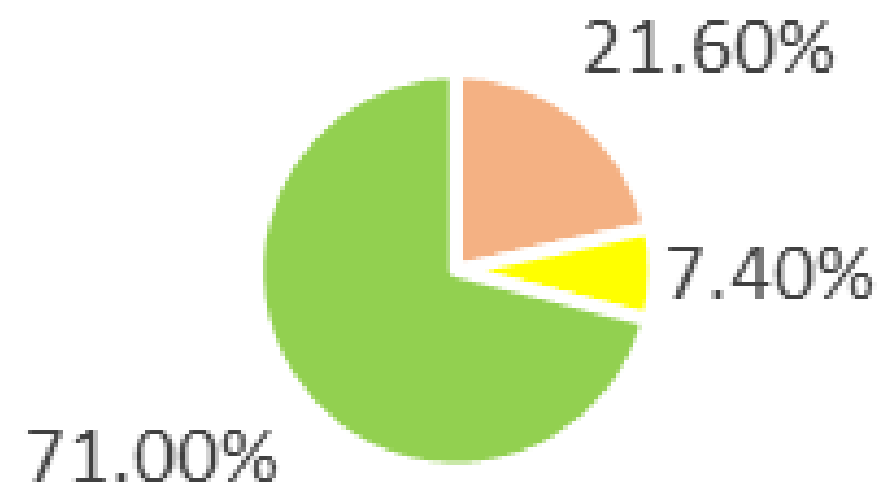
- Thematic analysis of Emerging Themes
 - Reflection entries (N = 746)
 - 3 Main Themes (codes = 1180)
 - Increased Anxiety
 - Neither increased/decreased anxiety
 - Decreased Anxiety
- Treatments
 - Weekly coaching sessions (10-12)
 - Participation in "Experiences" (3+)
- Instruments for data collection
 - Modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986)
 - Student reflections



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RESULTS - QUALITATIVE

Total Comments about Anxiety



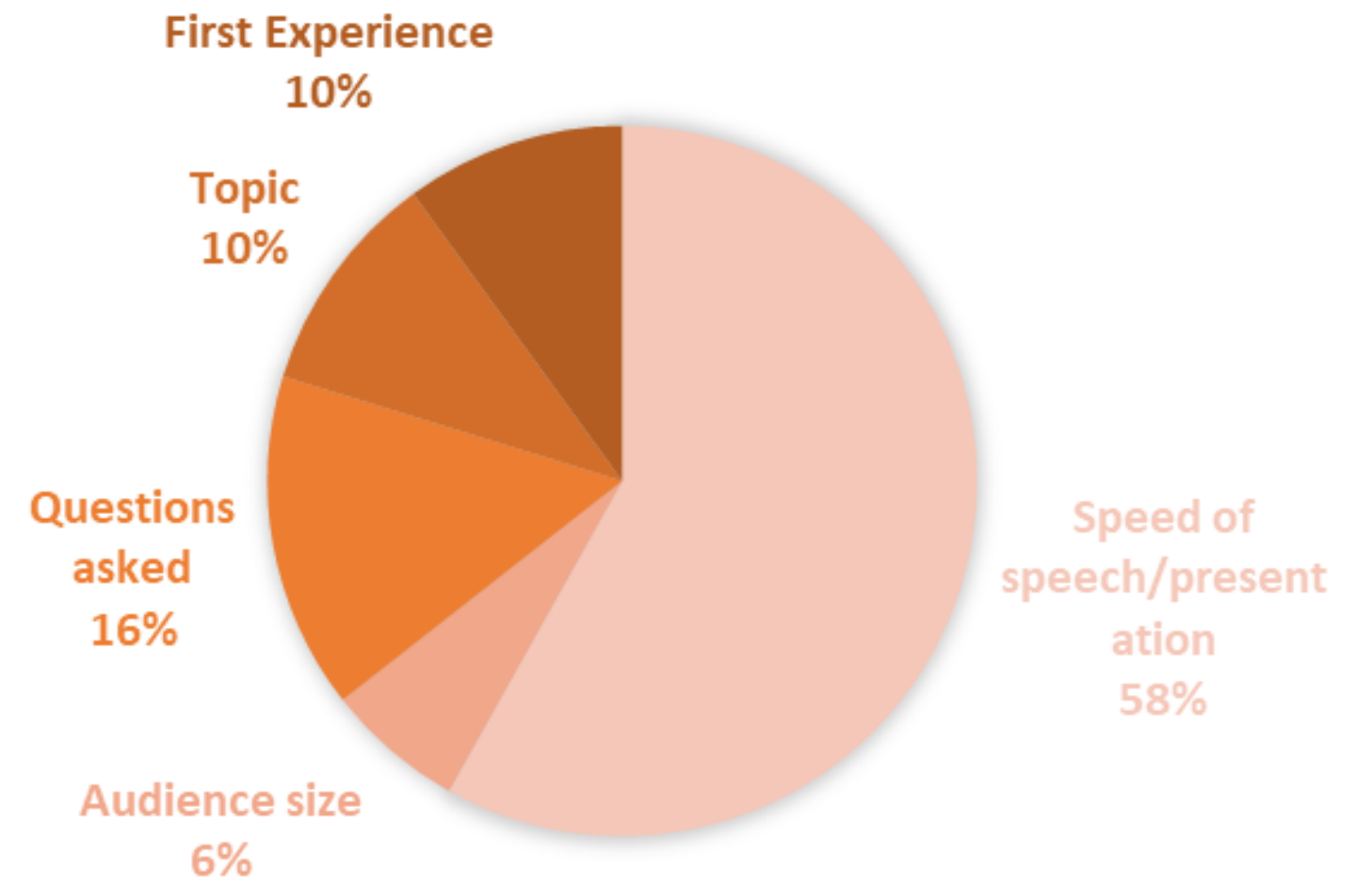
- Increased Anxiety (255/1180)**
- Neither Increased nor Decreased Anxiety (87/1180)**
- Decreased Anxiety (838/1180)**

Theme	Emergent Code (Sub-themes)	Number of sub-theme instances
Increased Anxiety	Speed of speech/presentation	149
	Audience size	16
	Questions asked	39
	Topic	26
	First Experience	25
	SUBTOTAL	255
Neither increased nor decreased Anxiety	No effect	45
	No anxiety-related benefits, but overall	30
	Normal School-related Anxiety	12
	SUBTOTAL	87
Decreased Anxiety	Known expectations	60
	Interesting topic/beauty of topic	60
	No obligations/pressure	218
	No talking required	94
	Extends to other uses of Spanish/Cultural Competencies	136
	Coach's interaction/presentation	169
	Social support / community	101
	SUBTOTAL	838
	TOTAL	1180

The Study

RESULTS - QUALITATIVE

INCREASED ANXIETY

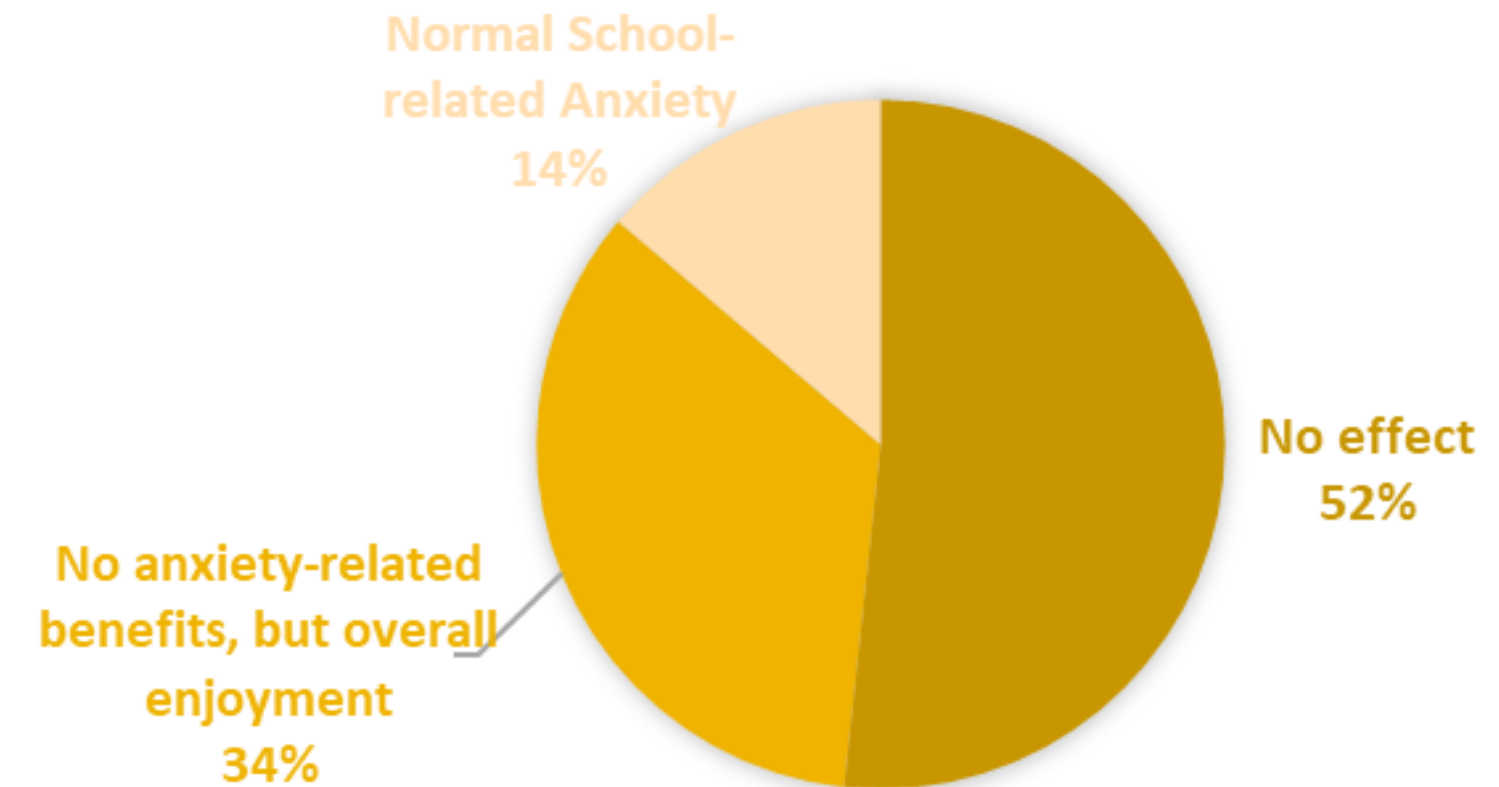


Theme	Emergent Code (Sub-themes)	Examples
Increased Anxiety 21.6% (255)	Speed of speech/presentation 58% (149)	"...the only times I felt somewhat anxious were when the instructors would speak very fast."
	Audience size 6% (16)	"I was also intimidated by the number of participants that were commenting in more advanced Spanish. I felt like a deer in headlights. I can best describe it as being around a group of people that have many inside jokes and keep laughing with each other while I was left out on the side. Because of this, I decided not to sign up for another LinguaMeeting Experience until the end of the semester was approaching when I would know more words."
	Questions asked 16% (39)	"The kahoot and responding in chat were still the most stressful parts." "I even get nervous responding to the questions in chat because there are so many others in attendance, and many of them seemed to be more fluent in Spanish than I am."
	Topic 10% (26)	"I think when Selene was singing up on stage in a show, it affected my anxiety the most since I can experience the anxiety and pressure that it takes to perform well in front of an audience." "the only way it rises my anxiety is if I feel as though I don't know enough about the culture to talk about it to a professional."
	First Experience 10% (25)	"It was scary going into this first experience because I did not know what to expect." "While the experience was "low-stakes" as it was marketed, I still felt a little nervous"

The Study

RESULTS - QUALITATIVE

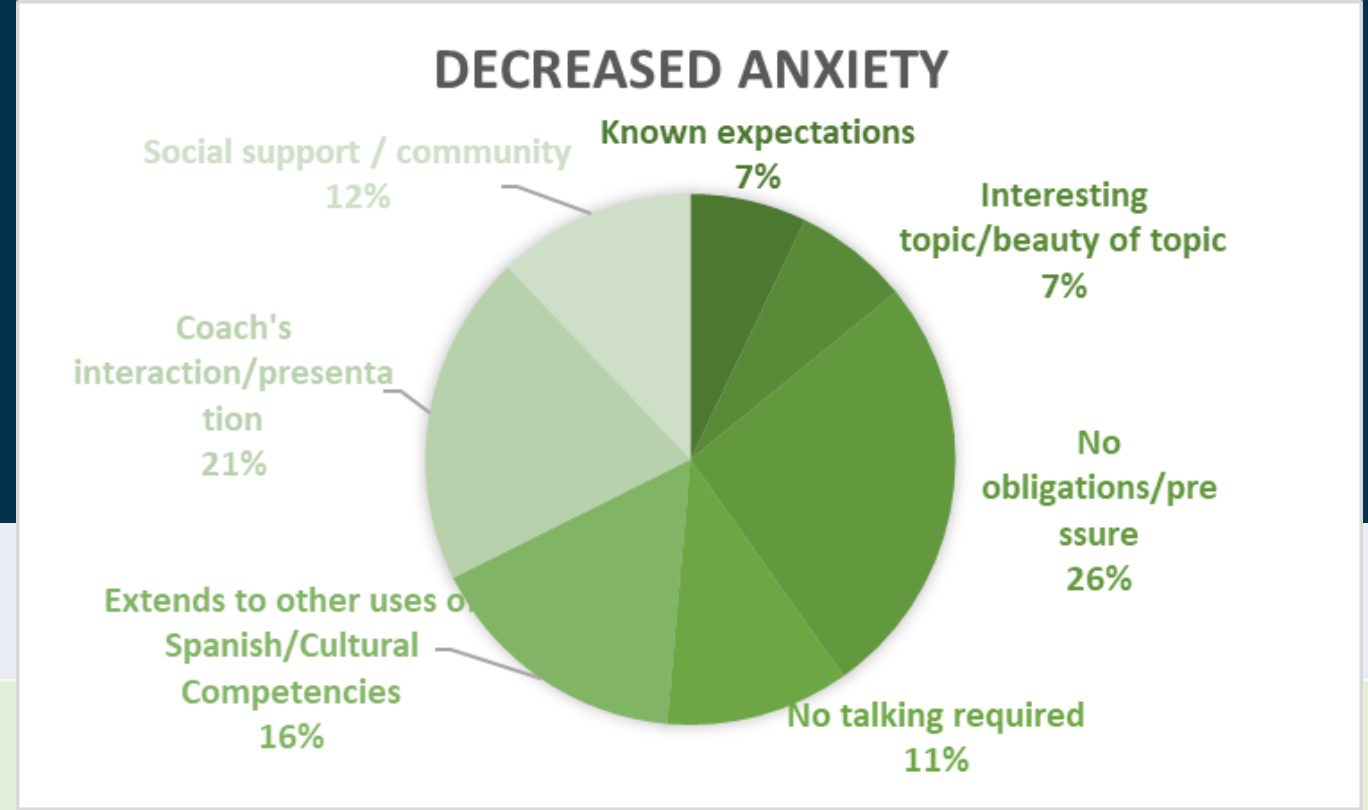
NEITHER INCREASED NOT DECREASED ANXIETY



Theme	Emergent Code (Sub-themes)	Examples
Neither increased nor decreased Anxiety 7.4% (87)	No effect 52% (45)	<p>"I'm not sure that the experience really has any impact on my anxiety level."</p> <p>"I cannot say that the experience really influenced my anxiety level directly. My anxiety level is high as my knowledge and skills are weak."</p>
	No anxiety-related benefits, but overall enjoyment 34% (30)	<p>"I have come to enjoy the experencia's. I don't have much anxiety when listening to them, but enjoy going back afterward and listening again and trying to learn more than I did the first time."</p> <p>"I did not experience any anxiety because I was honestly <u>really comfortable</u> because they were very nice and kept our attention the whole time. I forgot to even think about myself because I was too busy learning."</p>
	Normal School-related Anxiety 14% (32)	<p>"The feelings of anxiety I have otherwise though are just kind of baseline that I don't think are ever possible for me in particular to remove from a school related experience like this."</p> <p>"I am overall an anxious person. Especially in new situations, I generally do not go out of my comfort zone. However, I also know that doing so will also hamper me. I was mostly worried about not knowing what to say in Spanish, as I wanted to fully understand what was being said between Melany and the LinguaMeeting representative. However, using what I learned at that point put me better at ease."</p>

The Study

RESULTS - QUALITATIVE



Theme	Emergent Code (Sub-themes)	Examples
Decreased Anxiety 71% (838)	Known expectations 7% (60)	<p>"At this point, experiences do not really cause me any stress since I fully know what to expect."</p> <p>"My anxiety was not existent as this was my fourth experience and knew what to expect."</p>
	Interesting topic/beauty of topic 7% (60)	<p>"It was also more calming because of the mountains and water since those have always just been places that have made me feel more calm."</p> <p>"I have no anxiety about these Experiences and especially this one. I love music and we got to listen to a lot of music and just comment on what we thought of it. I really loved this one a lot and enjoyed every bit of it. I wasn't anxious at all and was very comfortable."</p>
	No obligations/pressure 26% (218)	<p>"This experience was probably the least anxiety inducing so far as there were fewer questions asked so it was pretty much just watching and experiencing the beauty of Honduras with next to no obligations."</p> <p>"I think these experiences are an excellent way to learn and practice without stressing. There's nothing to be anxious about during the event, so it's all fun!"</p>
	No talking required 11% (94)	<p>"Since we don't get put on the spot, I feel relaxed while watching and participating by chat."</p> <p>"These experiences help with my anxiety because I am not forced to be able to converse."</p>
	Extends to other uses of Spanish/Cultural Competencies 16% (136)	<p>"Since you learn from the experiences, using Spanish and hearing Spanish in other situations also becomes less stressful."</p> <p>"I think this helps to lower my anxiety as this carnival helps provide more talking points with other Spanish-speaking individuals. it gives me more knowledge about the culture so that I may know what to say about history and different cultural practices."</p>
	Coach's interaction/presentation 21% (169)	<p>"It did seem that Daniela spoke clearly and slower than previous experience hosts, this was helpful because I felt like I was able to digest the language a bit easier."</p> <p>"I like that the coaches are very gracious if we do not use the exact grammar or phrases that are proper. They just help us switch it in a way that does not make us feel stupid."</p>
	Social support / community 12% (101)	<p>"I also realize that most people are willing to help when you are willing to try. By participating in the experience, I think that it is anxiety reducing to realize we all have things in common and that tends to put me at ease."</p> <p>"Seeing all the other non native speakers asking questions and giving one word answers was the most comforting part of this experience for me so I knew I wasn't alone in it."</p>

The Study

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

- **How does cultural engagement via Virtuale Exchange relate to FLA levels?**
 - There appears to be a generalized decrease in FLA that initially correlates with attendance to Virtual Exchange initiatives.
 - Students with less experience (SPN1130) report greater initial FLA than those students with more experience (SPN1131).
 - Students in both levels report a similar decrease in FLA at the end of the semester.
 - Beginner level I students show an increase in FLA in the last third of the course that does not seem to be related specifically to virtual exchange (more research is needed)
- **How do students perceive the effect of virtual exchange on their anxiety levels?**
 - Overwhelmingly students believe that engaging in virtual exchange has a positive effect on decreasing their FLA.
 - A large number of students directly attribute this positive effect to the cultural and artistic topics shared during the experiences.

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References





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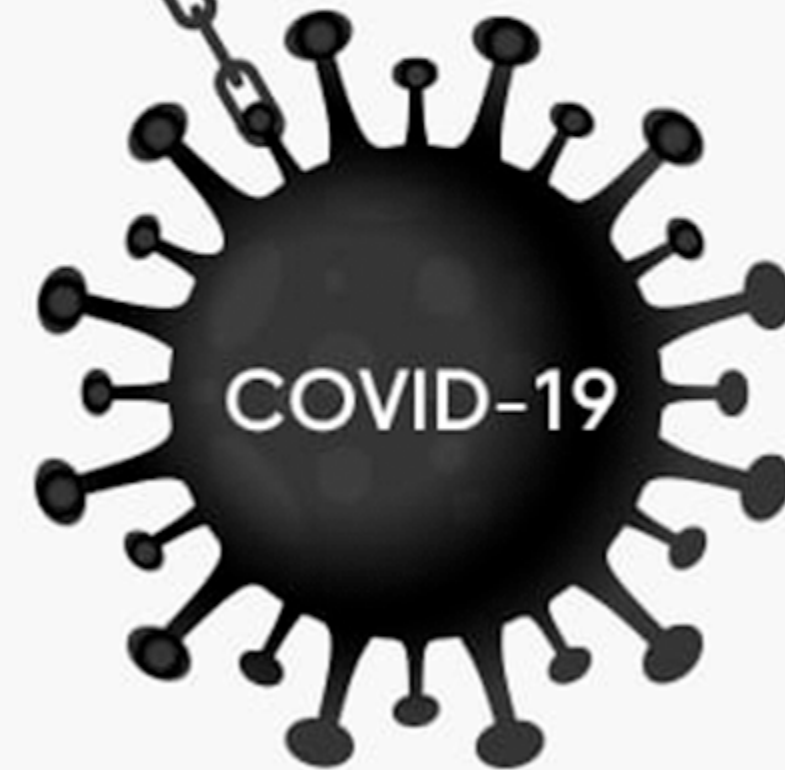
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THANK YOU!



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