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Language Program Articulation: Developing a Theoretical Foundation

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Chapter 9

Factoring in Previous Study of Other Foreign Languages when Designing Introductory Courses

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Abstract

A theory of articulation for foreign language (FL) programs must consider factors that differentiate students in courses. This empirical study identifies one factor affecting horizontal and vertical articulation of first-semester French, Spanish, and Italian courses: whether students new to the language of the current class have experience studying another FL at the post-secondary level. This new variable—no other college language (NOCL) versus other college language (OCL)—was used to determine (1) whether NOCL and OCL students differ in anxiety level and plans to continue language study, (2) if anxiety levels differ between OCLs who have studied another Romance language and those who have studied a non-Romance language, and (3) classroom factors that foster comfort. Students completed a questionnaire including the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986), MacIntyre and Gardner Anxiety Subscales (1989, 1994), demographic information, and an open question. Statistical analyses revealed that although neither group was extremely anxious, NOCLs were significantly more anxious than OCLs and NOCLs taking Spanish experienced significantly more anxiety than those taking French and Italian. There were significant differences for NOCLs and OCLs on the Input, Processing, and Output subscales, with significantly higher Input anxiety for Spanish than Italian students and significantly higher Processing anxiety for Spanish than for French or Italian students. No significant difference in anxiety was found between OCLs who had studied a Romance language and those who had studied a non-Romance language. No significant difference was found between NOCLs and OCLs in their plans to continue studying the language. Student-identified sources pointed to the importance of instructors and classmates in creating a comfortable classroom. Interview comments from randomly selected students reinforced these findings. The chapter concludes by suggesting that this new factor be considered part of interdisciplinary articulation: each language, like each discipline a student studies, affects learning other FLs subsequently.

Introduction

The most recent (2002) survey of the Modern Language Association had good news for foreign language (FL) programs. From 1998 to 2002, the number of students studying FLs in U.S. institutions of higher education rose 17.9%, with students studying a wider variety of languages than ever before. It is increasingly possible that students are not limiting themselves to one FL and that they might therefore come to an introductory language class with language learning experience. This increase is suggested by a comparison of the language learning backgrounds of Spanish students at the University of Pittsburgh in 1987 and those of Spanish students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2003. In the 1987 study, Glisan (1987) reported that 30.9% of beginning Spanish students had studied another language in high school and 9.1% had studied another language in college. In the unpublished Wisconsin survey, 34.4% of beginning Spanish students had studied another language in high school and 21.7% had studied another language in college. Although these data come from different institutions, they nonetheless suggest that studying multiple FLs is on the rise. We cannot help but wonder, then, if having experienced language learners in introductory classes will affect articulation throughout the first two years of language study.

Lange (1982) identifies three types of articulation: **horizontal** (coordination across sections with the same objectives), **vertical** (continuity throughout an instructional sequence), and **interdisciplinary** (associations with other disciplines). The presence of experienced language learners in classes with novices presents initially an issue for horizontal articulation, especially in multi-section courses where instructors wish to create similar learning environments and reach similar goals. As Byrnes points out (1990), language program directors (LPDs) assure comparability among multi-section classes, and thus must be particularly concerned with the issue of experienced versus nonexperienced language learners. Eventually, differences between experienced and nonexperienced learners affect vertical articulation if one group exceeds the other in achievement. Such differences affect interdisciplinary articulation if we consider each language studied to be a subject matter that influences other languages studied. Examining gaps between the profession's desire to articulate its programs and its practices, Byrnes points to the key role played by textbooks and tests in articulating language courses. With regard to introductory textbooks, some publishers are now striving to reach experienced language learners through segments addressing French for students of Spanish, for example. With regard to tests, particularly oral testing, LPDs might wonder if students who know more than one language have an advantage because they are more facile with communication strategies than novice language learners.

Research over the past decade has focused on the various types of learners who come to FL courses: students with diverse interests, cognitive styles, learning strategies, aptitudes, and goals (Byrnes 1990). Another, largely unstudied feature of this diversity is previous FL study. Since the advent of the proficiency movement in the 1980s, the profession has viewed language learning as a “readiness to deal with

certain features of language” (Byrnes 1990, p. 285). Wouldn’t experienced language learners have an advantage in processing language input, as well as in the output they produce in class and on speaking tests?

Learners with Linguistic Multicompetence

To consider these possible advantages, it is useful to review briefly key studies on linguistic multicompetence. A number of studies indicate that bilingualism, especially when combined with biliteracy, has a positive effect on the acquisition of a third language, whether an FL (Cenoz 1996; Sanz 2000) or a second majority language (Swain et al. 1990). In a review of research on linguistic processing, McLaughlin and Nayak (1989) conclude that “expert learners” demonstrate more flexibility and variety in learning strategies than “novice learners.” In a study using an artificial miniature linguistic system, Nayak et al. (1990) indicates that multilingual adults are more able than monolinguals to adjust learning strategies required for particular tasks. Klein (1995) compares “multilingual” and “unilingual” ESL learners from a variety of linguistic backgrounds to find that multilinguals exhibit higher degrees of both lexical learning and preposition stranding knowledge.

Cook uses the term **linguistic multicompetence** to describe “the compound state of a mind with two grammars” (1991, p. 112). He argues that one bilingual has different abilities and qualities than two monolinguals of those same languages—that there is a sort of additive and synergistic effect that results in a whole greater than the sum of the parts. Among a number of differences considered, Cook (1992) reports evidence that second language users have higher levels of meta-linguistic awareness than monolinguals. This advantage has ramifications for language program articulation. In terms of horizontal articulation, do students with backgrounds in other languages need or want the same type of introductory class as students learning their first FL? If experienced and nonexperienced language learners are in the same class, would students’ perceptions of their classmates’ abilities or aptitudes affect the classroom dynamic and perhaps the achievement of each group, which would create issues for vertical articulation? Would articulation thus be affected by anxiety among the novice language learners who study in the same introductory class as more experienced language learners? This chapter presents a study that compares anxiety levels in experienced and novice FL learners in introductory French, Spanish, and Italian classes. The findings have implications for articulating introductory- and intermediate-level language courses.

Anxiety and FL Learning

It is commonly accepted that many students are anxious in language classes and that anxiety can have debilitating effects on language learning (e.g., Horwitz 1990; Koch and Terrell 1991; Price 1991; Young 1992). LPDs need to ask if the way they articulate courses could contribute to an anxious learning environment. According to Vogely (1998), anxiety can be stimulated by specific situations, such as the need to process input rapidly. Inexperienced language learners may feel more anxious when sharing a class with experienced students who process information more easily. Or, experienced learners might be bored by a slow pace; this boredom could lead

to a lack of attentiveness that potentially creates learning problems, and consequently makes learners anxious. Research by Frantzen and Magnan (forthcoming) shows that novice language learners (**true beginners**) were more anxious than students who had studied a language in high school and were starting over in introductory courses (**false beginners**). Might not students with experience studying a different FL be another sort of false beginner, one who is not new to language study even if new to a particular language? If this is true, then the factor of previous FL study could affect how students perform in introductory classes. If some sections of a multi-section course have more students with previous language study than others, differences in class dynamics related to this factor would make articulation across sections of the same course more complex.

Indeed, anxiety affects articulation in large part because it is cyclic in nature: anxious students perform poorly and become more anxious (MacIntyre 1995). Vertical articulation is clearly affected when students achieve different levels in different sections, making it difficult for LPDs to sustain neatly articulated programs. In fact, Half and Frisbie (1977) and Phillips (1992) associate anxiety with the decision to discontinue FL study. To respond to concerns about anxiety, some scholars have suggested separate sections for true and false beginners (Christensen and Wu 1993; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley 2000). One might wonder whether this suggestion should be applied to students who have studied other languages and students who have not. This decision is especially important for large programs where enrollment permits the creation of accelerated, decelerated, or other sections for specific groups of students.

The Study

The current study considers first-semester students in French, Spanish, and Italian classes to investigate the relationship between anxiety in the current language class and previous experience studying other FLs in college. The potential effect of previous college FL study came to our attention during interviews associated with a larger study of true and false beginners in first-semester language at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (Frantzen and Magnan, forthcoming). During interviews for the larger study, many of the true beginners mentioned that either their own or their classmates' previous study of a different FL affected their experience in their current first-semester class. Interviewees described how meta-linguistic awareness helped them learn, but also how they were bored during explanations of concepts they had already acquired and confused by their own or their classmates' negative transfer between languages. Some interviewees envied students who appeared more capable and expressed the desire for a more level playing field that they thought a class made up of students with comparable language learning experience would provide. If students studying their first FL think that having classmates who have previously studied a different FL causes unfair competition or detracts from their learning, it would seem that the factor of previous FL study would relate to students' anxiety levels. Increased anxiety might also be found among experienced students if that previous FL study caused negative transfer,

making it hard to learn the new language. Either source of anxiety would have implications for language program administration, curriculum design, and pedagogical practice.

We also noted a false perception among Italian students that implied an effect of previous college language study. When asked to assess the language background of their classmates, 33.2% of 199 first-semester Italian students believed that as many as half the students had studied Italian before or spoke it at home. But, in reality, only one student (0.5%) had studied Italian before and only four students (2%) reported being heritage speakers. The perception that certain students had a linguistic advantage over others came not from students with experience in Italian, but from those who had previously studied other FLs, typically Spanish or French.

The possibility that previous FL study in college was affecting our classroom dynamic encouraged us to examine enrollment data to see if there were enough students with this background in introductory courses to be concerned about this unstudied variable. At the University of Wisconsin–Madison in fall 2002, 55% of French students, 41% of Italian students, and 49% of Spanish students had studied another language in college. Fall 2003 showed a similar result for French (52%) and Spanish (53%) and somewhat less for Italian (26%). Given these high percentages, the variable other college language (OCL) versus no other college language (NOCL) seems to be potentially important. We chose to use previous FL study in college as our variable because we thought it represented a more comparable experience than the many different types of FL experience available in elementary, middle, and high schools, and other language learning situations. These learning situations could have occurred to a variety of extents, and at a variety of points in the near or distant past, and presumably would have involved many different learning environments, approaches, and curricula.¹

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference in the anxiety level between learners in first-semester French, Spanish, and Italian courses who have studied other language(s) in college and those who have not?
2. Is there a difference in the anxiety level between learners in first-semester French, Spanish, and Italian courses who have previously studied another Romance language in college and those who have studied a non-Romance language in college?
3. Is there a difference in the plans to continue language study of learners in first-semester French, Spanish, and Italian courses who have studied other language(s) in college and those who have not?

Participants

The study involved a subset of all 689 students enrolled in first-semester French, Spanish, and Italian at the University of Wisconsin–Madison during fall semester 2002. The subset consisted of only the students who were true beginners to the language being studied, that is, they had not studied that same language previously in

high school or college ($n = 402$). These true beginner students were classified either as having studied other college language (OCLs, $n = 187$) regardless of the number of semesters, or as having studied no other college language (NOCLs, $n = 215$). As Table 1 reveals, the language groups differed in the percentage of OCLs and NOCLs.

Table 1
Study Participants with Other (OCL) or No Other (NOCL) College Language Experience

College Language Study	French Students	Spanish Students	Italian Students
OCL-Romance	32% (n=29)	31% (n=35)	33% (n=66)
OCL-Non-Romance	23% (n=21)	18% (n=21)	8% (n=15)
Sub-total OCLs	55% (n=50)	49% (n=56)	41% (n=81)
NOCL	45% (n=41)	51% (n=58)	59% (n=116)
Total	n=91	n=114	n=197

The students' demographic characteristics were similar in the three languages with respect to the distribution between males and females, academic status, first language, foreign travel experience, and reason for studying an FL. One notable difference among languages was that 6% of the French students and 4% of Italian students, compared with 24% of the Spanish students, believed the language would be useful in their futures.

Procedures and Methods

The study used both quantitative methods on data from a written questionnaire and qualitative analysis of face-to-face interviews.

Written Questionnaire. The questionnaire² contained Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), MacIntyre and Gardner's (1989) Anxiety Subscales, an open-ended question about students' pedagogical preferences, and personal background questions. The FLCAS focuses on communication apprehension, fear of social evaluation, and test anxiety, areas that affect the dynamic between experienced and nonexperienced language learners. According to MacIntyre (1995), the FLCAS is a trait-based measure that identifies students who have experienced anxious situations and predicts those who will experience anxiety in the future. Research has confirmed its construct validity (Horwitz 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner 1989, 1994) and its high reliability: Cronbach's alpha coefficient .93 and test-retest reliability over eight weeks, $r = .83$ (Horwitz 1986). The MacIntyre and Gardner Anxiety Scale (1989) considers three stages during which learners might experience anxiety: **Input** (attention deficits and poor reception of information), **Processing** (problems rehearsing and integrating new information with known material), and **Output** (difficulties retrieving and using learned information to produce language). MacIntyre and Gardner

(1994) report reliability among the three scales (alpha coefficient .78, .72, and .78, respectively) and a significant correlation with other anxiety measures.

In the subset of data that formed the current study, reliability was strong on the FLCAS (Cronbach's alpha = .936) and moderate on the Input (alpha = .711), Processing (alpha = .734), and Output (alpha = .655) subscales. A doctoral student in statistics analyzed the data using SPSS. Of the FLCAS items, eighteen were rescored³ so that their directionality would indicate anxiety. All ANCOVAs were done using motivation⁴ as a covariate because motivation is commonly recognized as a reason students differ in their success in FL (e.g., Jakobovits 1969; Lambert 1972). The alpha level for claiming a statistically significant difference was set at .05 (two-tailed test).⁵ The open-ended question asked students what made them comfortable in class. Responses were encoded according to nine instructional components mentioned by the students—instructor, class dynamics, materials, pace, activities, feedback, homework, texts, language of instruction—and these responses were tallied and analyzed.

Individual Interviews. Following Fukai (2000) and Phillips (1992), interviews were conducted to help explain the quantitative findings of the survey and to provide additional insight. This study considers interviews of twenty-seven students (eight French, nine Spanish, ten Italian) that were done during the last week of the semester by the second and third authors. The students interviewed were chosen randomly by the second and third authors. The interviewers asked students what made them comfortable and uncomfortable in class and why.⁶

Findings and Discussion

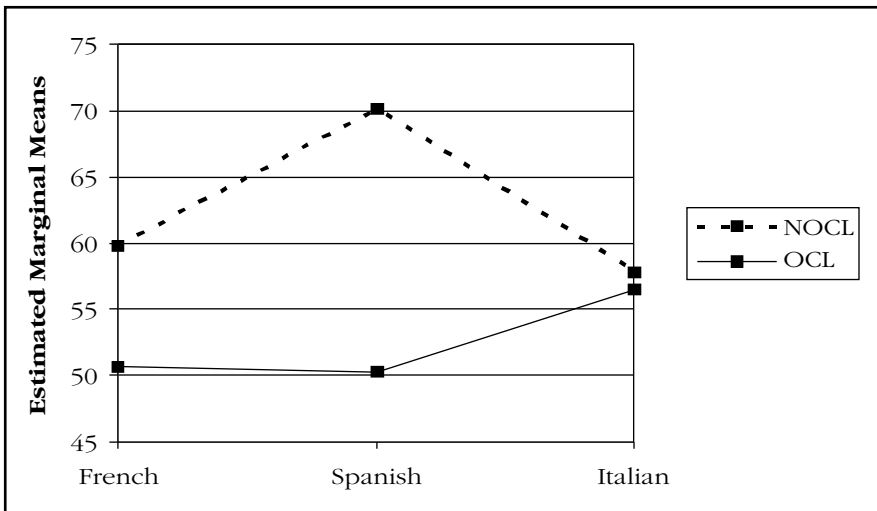
The research questions were addressed through statistical analysis of the FLCAS and the MacIntyre and Gardner subscales. The findings of each research question are discussed in terms of previous research and their relevance to articulation and other concerns of LPDs. Where interview comments shed light on the findings, they are included as well.

1. *Is there a difference in the anxiety level between learners in first-semester French, Spanish, and Italian courses who have studied other language(s) in college and those who have not?*

To investigate this question, students were classified as NOCLs and OCLs and the responses of the two groups on the FLCAS scale were compared, with the assumption that stronger agreement with the statements indicated greater anxiety. A two-way ANCOVA using motivation as a covariate revealed a significant difference for level of anxiety between NOCLs and OCLs ($F_{1,394} = 24.039, p = .000$), with the NOCLs being more anxious than the OCLs (Mean_{NOCL} adjusted = 62.574, SD_{NOCL} = 1.425, Mean_{OCL} adjusted = 52.529, SD_{OCL} = 1.429). There was also a significant interaction between Language and Previous College Study ($F_{2,394} = 8.628, p = .000$). As Figure 1 shows, the interaction occurred because there was little difference between NOCLs and OCLs in Italian compared with the differences between these two groups in French and Spanish.

Figure 1

Interaction in Anxiety Differences of NOCL and OCL Learners in French, Spanish, and Italian: FLCAS Scale



It is not surprising that OCL students were less anxious than NOCL students because the OCLs might have been more accustomed to the college FL learning experience (e.g., faster pace, higher demands, use of target language, responsibility for independent learning), or because fewer OCLs were freshmen, or both.

The interaction between Language and Previous College Study is more surprising. Why would Spanish NOCLs experience substantially more anxiety than the French and Italian NOCLs? The answer could relate to class composition involving another group of students with previous language-learning experience: false beginners, that is, students enrolled in first-semester courses who had studied that language previously in high school. Whereas the Spanish classes consisted of approximately two-thirds false beginners and the French classes one-third false beginners, the Italian classes had virtually none. The false beginners were not included in this study, but their presence in class may have added to the dynamic of mixing experienced language learners (false beginners + OCLs) and nonexperienced learners (true beginners + NOCLs). As reported above, Frantzen and Magnan (forthcoming) found that true beginners were more anxious than false beginners in French and Spanish classes. In the current study, the class composition could have fostered greater anxiety in the NOCLs in French and Spanish compared with Italian, where there were very few false beginners. The distribution of false beginners parallels the level of anxiety experienced by the NOCL group: highest in Spanish, followed by French, and nearly nonexistent in Italian classes.

A closer look at the FLCAS survey results offers insight on the sources of students' anxiety. Means were determined for each of the twenty-four items on the FLCAS scale, and the twenty-four items were ranked to show the relative degree of

anxiety associated with each one. Table 2 presents the ranks and actual means of the ten items for which the mean was greater than 2 on the 0–4 Likert response, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. On this scale a mean of 2 would indicate neither agreement nor disagreement; a mean greater than 2 would indicate some degree of anxiety. Items with means of less than 2 are grayed out in Table 2. Only ten items are reported in Table 2 because only ten had a ranking of 2 or more; nonetheless, the ranks of these items reflect their relative position on the full twenty-four-item scale. A comparison of the relative anxiety ratings (ranks) and absolute anxiety ratings (means) reveals both differences of relative weight given by participant groups and differences in actual anxiety levels.

Consistent with the significant difference in amount of anxiety between the two groups, the actual means of the NOCL group tended to be higher than those of the OCL group. However, neither the NOCLs nor the OCLs in any of the languages reported an extreme amount of anxiety, given that the highest mean was 3 (Agree) out of a maximum possible of 4 (Strongly Agree).

Consistent with findings of previous research (Horwitz 1990; Koch and Terrell 1991; Phillips 1992; Price 1991; Young 1992), several items on which students expressed the highest levels of anxiety involved speaking the language. The item with the highest anxiety score for both NOCLs and OCLs in all three languages was “I would be nervous speaking [the target language] with native speakers.” The Spanish OCLs had the lowest mean of the six groups on this point. The fact that the university community has a sizeable Spanish-speaking population but does not have many French or Italian speakers might help explain the relatively lower anxiety on this point for the Spanish OCL students. One Spanish student remarked: “I took the course voluntarily ... I’ve heard Spanish a lot more in Madison so I thought this would be a cool opportunity.”

A high rank for relative anxiety was found for all the NOCLs and the Italian OCLs on the item “I feel pressure to prepare very well for class.” More than one-third of the students were using the course to satisfy the FL requirement. These students were likely quite concerned about their course grades. A program effect may also have contributed to the anxiety of Italian OCLs. Students who label themselves or are labeled by others as “unsuccessful language learners” often tell their instructors at our institution that their college advisers have encouraged them to study Italian based on the belief that there would be few or no classmates who had studied Italian in high school and that there would be less “unfair competition” from false beginners than in French, Spanish, or German classes. In fact, the Italian program serves a relatively high number of learners who experiment with various languages before finally sticking with the one that will complete their language requirement. This idea appears to be supported by the overall higher rate of anxiety among Italian OCLs than among Spanish and French OCLs, and may also explain why of the OCLs, only Italian OCLs felt particular pressure to prepare well for class.

The only group whose mean indicates that the course pace made them anxious was Spanish NOCLs, and they ranked it as the second-highest item. This same group had the highest mean on “I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you

Table 2
 Ranked and Actual Means on FLCAS Items that Demonstrate Anxiety (Actual Mean > 2)

No Other College Language (NOCL)			Item on FLCAS Survey	Other College Language (OCL)		
Fr	It	Sp		Fr	It	Sp
1 ^a 3.0 ^b	1 2.8	1 2.9	I would be nervous speaking French / Spanish / Italian with native speakers. (item 18 RS ^c)	1 2.8	1 2.7	1 2.6
2 2.7	3 2.5	9.5 2.6	I would probably not feel comfortable around native speakers of French / Spanish / Italian. (item 36 RS)	3 2.4	3.5 2.3	3 2.3
3 2.6	2 2.6	3 2.8	I feel pressure to prepare very well for French / Spanish / Italian class. (item 26 RS)	2 2.5	2 2.4	2 2.3
4 2.5	5 2.2	9.5 2.6	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French / Spanish / Italian class. (item 5)		3.5 2.3	
5 2.4	7.5 2.2	6 2.7	I do not feel confident when I speak in French / Spanish / Italian class. (item 22 RS)			
10.5 2.2			During French / Spanish / Italian class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course. (item 10)	4 2.1	5 2.1	
10.5 2.2	7.5 2.2	5.5 2.7	I understand why some people get so upset over French / Spanish / Italian classes. (item 15 RS)			4 2.2
13 2.1	4 2.2	4.5 2.7	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak French / Spanish / Italian. (item 34)			
		2 2.8	French / Spanish / Italian class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind. (item 29)			
		18 2.2	I worry about the consequences of failing my French / Spanish / Italian class. (item 14)			

a. Ranked responses: Relative level of Anxiety with 1 being Most Anxious and 18 being Least Anxious. Ranks are based on the full 24 items of the FLCAS scale.

b. Mean anxiety score: Highest 4.0 (Strongly Agree) to lowest 0.0 (Strongly Disagree).

c. RS indicates that an item was reverse scored so that the direction would indicate anxiety. The item has been reworded to reflect that direction.

have to learn to speak [the language].” This finding may again relate to the high number of false beginners in Spanish classes. One Spanish NOCL remarked: “at the beginning I thought ... I was getting it, I was understanding it, and then all of a sudden ... it seemed like it just all went over my head and so ... the people that had Spanish before ... kept up with it but I kind of felt ... overwhelmed.”

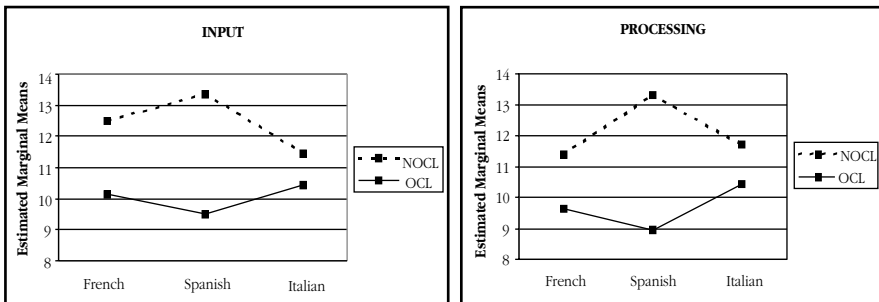
To look more closely at types of anxiety, the three MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) subscales were used. Two-way ANCOVAs, with motivation as a covariate, revealed significant differences between NOCLs and OCLs for all three subscales: Input, Processing, and Output. As the means in Table 3 reveal, the NOCLs exhibited more anxiety on all three subscales than the OCLs. This finding is consistent with the result of the FLCAS scale. All results thus point to the importance of the NOCL-OCL variable in defining class composition and perhaps ultimately articulation.

Table 3
Means (and Standard Deviations) of MacIntyre and Gardner Anxiety Subscales

	No Other College Language	Other College Language	$F_{1,394}$	p -value
Input	12.203 (0.273)	10.304 (0.273)	23.472	.000
Processing	11.810 (0.282)	10.010 (0.283)	19.665	.000
Output	13.359 (0.274)	12.499 (0.275)	4.768	.030

On these subscales there was a significant interaction for Language for Input ($F_{2,394} = 4.642, p = .010$) and Processing ($F_{2,394} = 4.853, p = .008$). In both cases, as shown in Figure 2, that interaction resembled the interaction found for the FLCAS scale: greater differences between NOCLs and OCLs for French, and especially for Spanish, than for Italian, where the difference in means between NOCLs and OCLs was only 0.562 for Input and 0.692 for Processing, compared with differences ranging between 1.29 and 3.42 on these scales in the other two languages.

Figure 2
Interactions Between Anxiety and Language for Input and Processing Subscales



The two significant interactions were examined further via pairwise interaction contrasts. For Input, the difference in anxiety between NOCLs and OCLs was significantly larger for Spanish than for Italian students ($t_{395} = 2.989, p = .003$), whereas for the other language contrasts there was not a significant difference. For Processing, the difference was significantly larger for French students ($t_{395} = 2.089, p = .038$) and for Spanish compared with Italian students ($t_{395} = 3.166, p = .002$). The question for language programs, then, is: Why does the NOCL-OCL variable have different effects in different language programs? The answer to this question is important for interdisciplinary articulation across French, Spanish, and Italian programs should institutions wish to provide comparable experiences to students who study different languages at the introductory level to fulfill a language requirement.

The obvious place to look for differences among languages is in the languages themselves. One student pointed us in this direction by comparing French and German: "I think that learning French [is] a little more difficult because it's not phonetic ... and German is totally phonetic ... I did have some anxiety when I'm trying to listen to my oral assignments and they're flying through it and ... because the words are so tied together it's hard to understand sometimes." As this student suggests, French, with its striking differences between orthography and pronunciation, would likely be difficult for students of Spanish and Italian, two languages that both have tighter correlations between pronunciation and spelling than does French. In contrast to French, students who had previously studied Spanish would benefit in pronunciation when studying Italian, and vice versa. The lack of significant interaction involving French on the Input scale, then, is surprising. It would seem that phonological differences are not the only component in the Input anxiety equation.

Another factor might be class composition. Recall that nearly all students in the Italian classes had had no previous study of Italian, whereas in the Spanish classes, approximately two-thirds of the students had taken Spanish before. Instructors may have adjusted their target language speech toward the majority of the students. In Italian this adjustment would mean simplifying the input for inexperienced students, whereas in Spanish it would result in casting the level of Spanish toward the more experienced majority rather than toward the beginners. Because NOCL students had less experience than OCL students coping with FL input, they would have been more affected by differences in the instructor's level of language.

If the Spanish students had more comprehension difficulty than their Italian counterparts (thus creating more Input anxiety), it would make sense that they would also have more difficulty rehearsing and integrating new information with known material (creating Processing anxiety) because they would have comprehended less and would consequently have less new information to tie in with already-known material. The class composition explanation would also then shed light on the significant interactions for Processing between Spanish and Italian and between Spanish and French. Both Spanish and French had a fair number of false beginners, but the percentage was greater in Spanish (two-thirds in Spanish

as compared with one-third in French). For Processing, as for Input, NOCLs expressed more anxiety than OCLs. Their anxiety might be related to the numbers of false beginners in their classes and how they affected the language used in class. If numbers of false beginners magnified the NOCL-OCL dynamic, the lack of significant interaction between French and Italian could be explained by the fact that French is midway between Spanish and Italian in terms of the proportion of false beginners in first-semester classes.

An alternate explanation for the Spanish-French Processing interaction might relate to the curriculum. Although both French and Spanish language programs use a communicative approach that stresses oral communication, listening was tested more frequently in the Spanish program—five times in Spanish compared with twice in French—which might have made students worry more about the input and processing stages of acquisition. Both programs included two speaking tests during the semester, relating perhaps to the lack of a significant interaction on the Output subscale.

One final dimension to consider is anecdotal evidence that more English may have been used by Italian instructors than by Spanish instructors, despite the fact that all three programs encourage the nearly exclusive use of the target language. Greater reliance on the target language would likely increase Input and Processing anxiety, especially among NOCL students who were not experienced in dealing with an FL.

What, then, is the message for LPDs? It would seem that the NOCL-OCL variable should be considered when anticipating and preparing to respond to student anxiety in introductory courses, and that this variable should be viewed in conjunction with other aspects of class composition and when making curricular choices. As a potential factor in horizontal articulation, the NOCL-OCL variable can create varying class compositions, which will result in different dynamics in sections of multi-section courses. In terms of vertical articulation, it likely relates to rate and level of student achievement, which will affect how students advance from one course to another. Finally, it provides a complex challenge across programs of different languages for providing similar learning environments and expectations for achievement across introductory sequences.

2. Is there a difference in the anxiety level between learners in first-semester French, Spanish, and Italian courses who have previously studied another Romance language in college and those who have studied a non-Romance language in college?

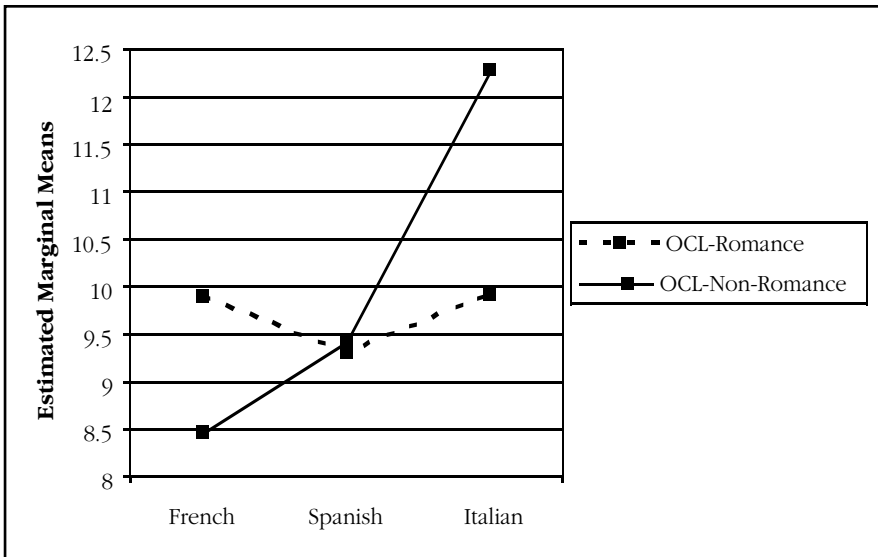
The second research question looks more closely at the OCL group. It might be expected that the type of language studied would relate to level of anxiety when studying a new language. For instance, having studied a language closer to the new language (i.e., another Romance language) might relate to lower anxiety than having studied a more distant (i.e., non-Romance) language. For research question 2, the sample was thus limited to OCL students, who were separated into two groups: those who had studied a Romance language (OCL-R) and those who had studied a non-Romance language (OCL-NR). Contrary to expectations, in a two-way ANCOVA

using motivation as a covariate, there was not a significant difference between the two groups. There was also not a significant interaction by language.

The Input, Processing, and Output subscales were checked with another two-way ANCOVA, again with motivation as a covariate. No significant differences were found for Input or Output. For Processing, however, there was a significant interaction ($F_{2,180} = 3.054, p = .050$). Figure 3 shows the crossover effect that likely resulted in the main effect not being significant ($p = .564$).

Figure 3

Interaction in Processing Anxiety between Learners Who Had Studied a Romance Language and Those Who Had Studied a Non-Romance Language



The differences between the OCL-R and OCL-NR groups is striking for French and Italian, but virtually nonexistent for Spanish. In French, OCL-R students showed more Processing anxiety than OCL-NR students. In Italian, the reverse was found. The higher degree of Processing anxiety among the French OCL-Rs may relate to difficulties in French phonology compared with the phonology of Spanish and Italian, the other Romance languages that these students likely studied. As was noted above, Spanish and Italian have a closer correspondence between orthography and pronunciation than does French. Consequently, students who had studied Spanish or Italian before French would likely find French more difficult to perceive and to produce than the language they had studied previously. This greater degree of perceived difficulty could contribute to the anxiety of French OCL-R students.

It is also striking that OCL-NR students showed considerable Processing anxiety when studying Italian, much more than when studying French or Spanish. Perhaps

students found that their non-Romance language was not as helpful in understanding or working with Italian as they might have expected, and this increased their Processing anxiety. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Italian instructors, aware that the vast majority of their students have previously studied French or Spanish at some level, tend to teach Italian from a contrastive perspective, evidencing similarities to and differences from these other Romance languages. This practice could doubtless create anxiety among those who had studied only non-Romance languages.

This result cautions LPDs to advise their instructors—especially Italian instructors—not to overlay similarities among Romance languages in mainstream introductory courses. For the most part, however, this result suggests that it is the fact of having studied another language in college that helps students be comfortable in introductory language courses, rather than the particular type of language they have studied. It is thus general language learning experience that LPDs should consider when articulating their programs.

3. Is there a difference in the plans to continue language study of learners in first-semester French, Spanish, and Italian courses who have studied other language(s) in college and those who have not?

A major concern of LPDs is to encourage continued enrollment. If NOCL students are more anxious than OCL students, does that anxiety influence their decisions about continuing language study? To answer research question 3, a loglinear analysis was performed on students' expressed intentions to continue or not to continue their language study. Controlling for motivation, there was not a significant difference between NOCLs and OCLs. Thus, it cannot be concluded that previous study of an FL in college is crucial in determining whether students pursue their study of a new language.⁷ Positive interview comments from both NOCLs and OCLs reinforce this finding, suggesting that the anxiety experienced in these introductory classes, although significantly greater among NOCLs, is not dangerously high. A tolerable level of anxiety is reflected in the actual means for items on the FLCAS survey, which suggest a moderate to low anxiety level in both groups of students overall. This finding is good news for language programs that cannot take other college language study into account in program design.

Pedagogical Findings and Implications

In this section, data from the open-ended responses to the survey and responses to the interviews are both discussed. In the open-ended question, students were asked to list, in order of priority, the four aspects of the course that were most important for making them feel at ease about their language learning experience.

Low means, shown in Table 4, indicate that students gave a category high priority for making them comfortable in class.⁸ The hierarchies for NOCLs and OCLs are quite similar, with five of the nine categories (instructor, classmates, books, homework, tests) having the same priority ranking or one rank different. The most important aspect for both groups is clearly the instructor. In fact, half the students interviewed (fourteen of twenty-seven) mentioned their instructor as a positive element for creating a comfortable class atmosphere.

Table 4
Aspects of Course Related to Students Feeling Comfortable

Students with No Other College Language (NOCL)		Students with Other College Language (OCL)
Aspect	Priority	Aspect
instructor (n=53) Mean=1.51	1	instructor (n=56) Mean=1.82
Eng vs. TL (n=38) Mean=1.97	2	pace (n=35) Mean=2.14
classmates (n=74) Mean=2.09	3	feedback (n=10) Mean=2.20
pace (n=55) Mean=2.22	4	classmates (n=59) Mean=2.36
activities (n=106) Mean=2.64	5	Eng vs. TL (n=24) Mean=2.38
feedback (n=10) Mean=2.70	6	books (n=13) Mean=2.46
books (n=18) Mean=2.72	7	homework (n=36) Mean=2.47
homework (n=36) Mean=2.75	8	activities (n=101) Mean=2.64
tests (n=27) Mean=2.85	9	tests (n=21) Mean=2.71

Camaraderie with classmates also ranked fairly high for comfort of both NOCL and OCL groups, a factor mentioned by more than one-third of the students (ten of twenty-seven). There were four categories in which responses of NOCL and OCL students differed by more than one rank. NOCL students gave second priority to the issue of English versus the target language, with the general feeling that more English would make them more comfortable. During the interviews, six students (five NOCLs, one OCL) expressed difficulty with having class conducted entirely in the FL: one said he felt stupid compared with his classmates because he couldn't understand the target language. Most of the negative interview comments were laced with positive remarks as well. For example, one said, "It's hard ..., 'cause you have to listen to and truly grasp onto what [the instructor]'s saying and sometimes you just don't really know what he's saying but that's good because you learn it so much better because not only are you looking at the grammar on your page but you're also hearing it used within the context of the language."

In contrast to opinions about using English in class, OCL students were more concerned than NOCL students about the pace of the course. It would be expected that, because of their experience, OCL students would be able to handle a faster pace than NOCL students. Interview comments did not really bear out this differential,

however, with five NOCLs and four OCLs complaining about the fast pace. Yet, these students all included positive remarks also, indicating that they managed to keep up with the fast pace, which was to be expected in a college class, and that it made them learn more over the semester. For the NOCL group, then, the ranking of pace as the fourth priority (versus the OCLs ranking in second priority) may be less about pace than about the relative importance of other issues, such as English versus the target language, which the NOCL group ranked second.

Feedback was also important for making both groups comfortable, but relatively more so for a greater number of OCL students than NOCL students. During the interviews, two OCL students said they liked the feedback they received in class and one NOCL student said she would like to have had more feedback on homework. A final area where the two groups differed by more than one ranking was activities: it was given fifth priority for affecting comfort level by NOCLs but eighth for OCLs. Interviews tended to support this difference, but the numbers are quite small, with two of twelve NOCLs and five of fifteen OCLs remarking on the benefits of activities for helping them feel at ease in class.

Relatively speaking, the items mentioned but given relatively low priority are items that we might have expected: books, homework, and tests. It is important for LPDs to note that materials are viewed by students as less crucial to creating a comfortable learning experience than aspects of class dynamics, that is, the instructor, classmates, and classroom practices. That is not to say that textbooks, homework, and tests are not important for articulation, for in most programs they are clearly key factors in creating symmetry across sections and smooth advancement from one course to the next. What it does suggest is that if smoothing out levels of anxiety is also important to both horizontal and vertical articulation, then LPDs should take into account factors such as the instructor, camaraderie, use of English, pace, feedback, and activities when they create classroom models for instructors.

Clearly, this hierarchy suggests areas for instructor training. The important role that the instructor plays in reducing anxiety in the classroom is paramount. Methods classes and workshops should provide models and techniques that instructors can use to lessen their students' anxiety.

Many communicative programs have a no-English policy based on the belief that input is the most important feature of an effective language class. Especially given the anxiety that NOCL students potentially associate with target language use in class, instructors need to be specifically trained to make their oral and written language accessible to students, while maintaining natural-sounding language. Increased use of cognates and familiar vocabulary and structures, as well as visual support, such as pictures, transparencies, PowerPoint presentations, writing on the board, gestures, and expressions, help make the input accessible to students. New instructors in particular need to be encouraged to incorporate these types of strategies into their class plans. To address this issue of articulation, LPDs must therefore consider how they can prepare their instructors to tailor their language to students' levels. In introductory courses, NOCL students might need more tailoring of the target language, and might prefer more English support,

whereas OCL students might be more like advanced introductory or intermediate students in their ability to handle target language instruction (Levine, this volume). Especially when NOCL and OCL students are in the same introductory class, the LPD should offer instructors examples and advice about finding an appropriate level of the target language that both groups of students can understand. Less experienced instructors might observe their more experienced colleagues to see how they provide comprehensible input, link new material to known material, practice new material in familiar contexts, and recycle vocabulary and grammatical structures. Such observation would also provide models on which to build smooth articulation across sections of the same course and between courses.

Because this research suggests that speaking in class and during oral exams may be stressful for both NOCL and OCL students, instructors might provide frequent and varied speaking and listening practice. In this study many students suggested that getting to know classmates helped reduce their anxiety. Instructors can encourage their students to interact by having them do well-designed paired and small-group activities and ensuring that they work with a variety of classmates. Three of the interviewed students suggested that having more oral tests would help reduce anxiety. Multiple tests may be hard to conduct with large classes, but another possibility may be to give oral tests earlier in the semester. To articulate introductory and intermediate courses, LPDs should consider how oral exams on the introductory level prepare students for oral exams on the intermediate level, and make sure that at least initially oral exams occur in low-anxiety situations. Although these pedagogical suggestions have been proposed for reducing anxiety among NOCLs, they are, in fact, appropriate for all students. As we have seen, both groups of students suggested such techniques for creating a comfortable language learning experience. Moreover, in the results of the FLCAS questionnaire, both groups indicated some—but not undue—*anxiety*, even though a significant difference in the intensity of that anxiety was found between them.

Administrative Implications

Beyond pedagogical suggestions, this research has implications for program structure. The significant findings on the anxiety scales and the different student preferences reported in Table 4 suggest that, for horizontal articulation, creating separate sections for NOCL and OCL students might lower students' anxiety. The NOCLs would relax with a slower pace and the OCLs would appreciate receiving more feedback. Given the finding that textbooks were not a great cause of anxiety, it should be possible to use the same material in both sections, but separating the groups would allow the OCLs to spend less time going over basic concepts and more opportunity to go into more depth than a slower-paced section would afford the NOCLs.

Alternately, programs with multi-section courses could create truly accelerated sections for OCL students. For example, the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Italian program offers not only honors sections of first- and second-semester Italian, but also several sections of "Italian for Speakers of Other Romance Languages." This accelerated course, which requires four high school years or four college semesters

of another Romance language, covers the entire first-year program in one semester, relying on students' familiarity with similar languages to allow them to progress rapidly, to avoid the boredom of studying at a truly elementary pace, and to prevent these more experienced learners from intimidating novices. This course, while moving at more than twice the normal pace, particularly encourages interaction in Italian because students need little or no explanation of target structures, can rely heavily on cognates between Italian and other Romance languages, and are generally not hesitant to converse in the new language. By better meeting the needs of these students, the program allows potential majors to advance more quickly to intermediate-level study, with the result that the program now sees more students in advanced-level courses than before the creation of this accelerated introductory course. Of course, initiating such a course brings up issues of vertical articulation, in particular whether these students can flow easily into the regular intermediate sequence. If students with differing levels of FL experience are taught in separate sections initially, at what point are they to be reunited? Whereas the findings of this study suggest that initial separation might provide comfort for some students, it also suggests that any initial separation would not need to continue for long. Simply offering separate first-semester sections might allow NOCL students the opportunity to grow accustomed to anxiety-related components that are inherent to most college language programs: fast pace, majority use of the target language, amount of homework, expectations for independent learning, and so forth. Such an initial separation might improve the confidence and ultimately the performance of NOCL students so that by the time they enter the second-semester course, the effects of these factors would be minimized.

If it is not administratively possible to create separate first-semester sections, instructors should at least be aware of the various backgrounds of their students. Through a beginning-of-the-semester survey, the instructor could find out how many students have studied the new or another language previously and could then modify instruction accordingly. A French OCL's remark supports this idea: "I wouldn't want it to be ... separate groups of people who had it and hadn't. ... I like how she mixed it—but I think it would be good for teachers to know ... in order to ... chart the class in a different way."

Future Research

This study reflects factors at one large university at a moment in time when, locally and nationally, FL study is on the rise. The researchers collected data only once, among only first-semester learners. These data were collected at the end of the semester, thus excluding responses from students who had dropped the course. Given that many students reported that familiarity with classmates alleviated anxiety, data collection carried out earlier in the semester would probably tap into students' initial fears when the risk of abandoning FL study is perhaps greater. Because the articulation of language programs changes and develops over time, longitudinal studies would be useful, as would studies that assess the NOCL-OCL variable at later stages of language learning.

This study looked at previous FL study in college, but certainly issues of high school (and earlier) language study are important. The current study also looked only at three commonly studied (and related) languages. Future investigation should consider other languages. It should also consider other factors that might relate to anxiety in language courses or to the choice of language, such as overall academic performance, verbal ability in the first language, or contact with target language speakers in the community. Questions of language experience, anxiety, and their effect on articulation in smaller programs is also important.

Conclusion

Instructors recognize anxiety as a potentially harmful factor in FL learning. LPDs, concerned with the learning experiences of their students and enrollments in their courses, typically strive to keep anxiety low in order to provide students with a supportive learning environment. This research identifies two groups of students that come to first-semester courses—those who have not studied another FL in college and those who have—and shows that, when in the same class, the former group is significantly more anxious than the latter. In the spirit of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards for Foreign Language Learning Project 1999), language programs look increasingly to other disciplines to provide students with knowledge of the world that they can bring to bear in their language classrooms; for example, a history course can inform the study of the French Revolution in French class. The findings of the current study suggest that such interdisciplinary articulation consider the study of other FLs as highly relevant to the study of a new FL. Indeed, this study suggests that students' backgrounds in other FLs are factors in both horizontal and vertical articulation. Less anxious students, with background in other languages, will likely be more comfortable in introductory language classes and acquire the new language more rapidly and therefore be able to move more quickly through instructional sequences than students without such background. This difference in comfort level poses a challenge to language program articulation: coordination across sections becomes difficult if the class composition of some sections encourages different approaches than used in other sections, and sustaining articulated programs is harder when students progress at substantially different paces.

What, then, should the LPD do? This study suggests first that the LPD be acutely aware of the potential anxiety that mixing experienced and nonexperienced language learners can create. Instructors should be prepared to recognize and deal with this potential anxiety, especially by learning ways to foster a supportive class atmosphere, to use the target language without making students anxious, to pace their lessons, and to create supportive activities. If enrollment permits, LPDs might consider special, accelerated sections designed for students with certain language learning backgrounds, such as sections of Italian for speakers of French and Spanish.

LPDs have long been concerned about false beginners in first-semester courses. This study reveals a new type of false beginner, one who has studied a different

language than the new one to be learned. As students with linguistic multicompetence become more numerous in the United States, this group will bring increasing challenges to articulation in introductory instruction. Efforts to articulate FL programs will need to consider the amount and type of FL experience when making decisions about course design, curriculum, placement, and especially instructor preparation. We should no longer categorize the language learning experience of students in introductory classes as though it were simply dichotomous—according to whether or not they have studied the language previously. Linguistic multicompetence brings a spectrum of students to our classes and with them serious challenges for articulating our FL courses and programs. Any model of articulation for introductory FL programs, then, especially those with multiple sections, should take into account the factor of previous FL study in college. Models serve to bring important issues forward for consideration and, with regard to teaching, to provide frameworks for course development and instructor training. Given the likely effect of the NOCL-OCL dimension on student comfort, class dynamics, and potentially on student achievement, this factor should be taken into account in new models of articulation that we will develop and apply to introductory FL teaching.

Notes

1. Given that the University of Wisconsin-Madison has an entrance requirement of two years of high school language study, we assumed that the situation might be magnified by students with previous high school experience. When accounting for high school FL study, more than 99% of students had some sort of previous language learning experience.
2. Available from authors.
3. Reverse scored items: 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 22, 26, 32, 36, 41, 42, 43, 47, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57.
4. Given that motivation for language study is often lower when students take a course primarily to fulfill a requirement, we used motivation as a covariate when analyzing the data in this study. Motivation was operationalized through item 68 of the questionnaire (reason for taking this language class). Students were divided into those taking the class primarily for a requirement and those taking it for all other reasons (e.g., usefulness for future career, personal interest or enjoyment, future travel).
5. Before beginning the analysis, significant differences that might relate to the particular language or to curricular or instructional differences between French, Spanish, and Italian were ruled out; a one-way ANCOVA, with motivation as a covariate, showed no significant difference between the French, Spanish, or Italian students on any of the anxiety scales. This failure to find a significant difference between the language groups lends support to Rodríguez and Abreu's (2003) finding of stability across English and French. To check for a language influence, nonetheless, two-way ANCOVAs were used in the current analysis to look for significant differences between experienced and nonexperienced learners as well as interaction effects by language.
6. Students were paid \$5.00 for their interview, which lasted ten to twenty-five minutes (averaging fifteen minutes). The interviews were recorded and later transcribed by a research assistant. The third author verified the accuracy of the transcripts by randomly selecting five minutes from each of five tapes (2% of total interview time). No discrepancies were found.

7. Given that a significant difference was not found for research question 3, a difference would not be expected if OCLs were divided into those who had studied a Romance and those who had studied a non-Romance language. A loglinear analysis was done, nonetheless, to make this comparison. As expected, no statistically significant difference was found.
8. Although a few language-specific differences occurred, the results of the three languages are combined here to show overall trends that point to factors to consider in designing and implementing language programs.

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