

**Is foreign language classroom enjoyment
related to gender, age, achievement,
foreign-language mastery, and education level?
A mixed-methods study on Saudi EFL students**

By

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Abstract:

In the context of Saudi FL classrooms, this research investigates the link between Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and a number of characteristics. A total of 143 current high school students, undergraduate, and postgraduate FL Saudi students were considered for this study. The high school students' study at three high schools, and the undergraduates and postgraduates are students at King Khalid University. An FLE measure was used based on Likert scale ratings of 21 items (MacIntyre & Dewaele, 2014). Qualitative data were collected via the open question included in the online questionnaire. The results of statistical analyses showed a relationship between FLE levels and the following independent variables: age group, education level, FL mastery, and general FL level (ranging from beginners to advanced). Compared to male participants, females reported more FLE. Testimonies from the participants about enjoyable situations in the FL class demonstrated the importance of the instructors' passionate qualities and their adeptness in creating a supportive peer group. Many participants shared their experiences of realizing that their prolonged efforts to become proficient in a particular FL skill had been fruitful.

Keywords: Saudi students, Foreign Language Enjoyment, English classroom

ملخص

هل يرتبط الاستمتاع بفصول اللغة الأجنبية بالجنس والعمر والإنجاز وإتقان اللغة الأجنبية ومستوى التعليم؟ دراسة بطرق مختلطة على طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية السعوديين

في سياق فصول اللغة الأجنبية السعودية، يبحث هذا البحث في العلاقة بين الاستمتاع باللغة الأجنبية وعدد من الخصائص. تم أخذ في الاعتبار إجمالي ١٤٣ من طلاب المدارس الثانوية الحاليين والطلاب الجامعيين وطلاب الدراسات العليا السعوديين في هذه الدراسة. ويدرس طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في ثلاث مدارس ثانوية، والطلبة الجامعيون وطلاب الدراسات العليا طلاب في جامعة الملك خالد. تم استخدام مقياس FLE بناءً على تصنيفات مقياس ليكرت المكون من ٢١ عنصرًا (ماكلنتير ودوايل، ٢٠١٤). تم جمع البيانات النوعية عبر السؤال المفتوح المتضمن في الاستبيان عبر الإنترنت. أظهرت نتائج الدراسات الإحصائية وجود علاقة بين مستويات إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية والمتغيرات المستقلة التالية: الفئة العمرية، ومستوى التعليم، وإتقان اللغة الإنجليزية، ومستوى اللغة الإنجليزية العام (يتراوح من المبتدئين إلى المتقدمين). بالمقارنة مع المشاركين الذكور، أبلغ عدد أكبر من الإناث عن الاستمتاع باللغة الأجنبية. أظهرت شهادات المشاركين حول المواقف الممتعة في فصل اللغة الإنجليزية أهمية الصفات العاطفية للمدرسين ومهاراتهم في إنشاء مجموعة أقران داعمة. شارك العديد من المشاركين تجاربهم في إدراك أن جهودهم المطولة لكي يصبحوا ماهرين في مهارة معينة في لغة اللغات الأجنبية قد أتت بثمارها.

الكلمات الدالة: الطلاب السعوديون، الاستمتاع باللغة الأجنبية، فصول اللغة الإنجليزية

Introduction:

Emotions are common in the classroom, and they have a significant impact on students' performance and engagement (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). Although everyone agrees that emotions have a critical role in language acquisition, the prevailing cognitive theory of language has largely neglected this. This caused academics to shift their attention away from "irrational" emotional elements and toward "scientific" cognitive ones, such as linguistic aptitude and learning techniques, and how these affect language acquisition (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015; Prior, 2019; Dewaele & Li, 2020).

Emotions, particularly the negative feeling of anxiety, have been the subject of much study in the area of second language acquisition (SLA) since Krashen's (1985) affective filter theory (MacIntyre, Gregersen et al., 2019; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre, 2017; Dewaele & Li, 2020). This study attempts to fill the emotional gap in SLA research and is a part of a new wave of research. Emotion has always been important in SLA, even before Positive Psychology became popular in the area (Dewaele, 2005, 2011; Arnold, 1999; Pavlenko & Dewaele, 2002; MacIntyre, 2002). Nonetheless, positive psychology-the scientific study of well-being and human functioning - offers a solid framework for examining the feelings of language learners. Positive psychologists primarily argue that general psychology emphasizes negative aspects more than positive ones. It's critical to foster happier feelings, encourage more involvement, and raise awareness of the purpose and pursuits of life (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Positive psychology advocates for a more comprehensive understanding of people, which in the context of

SLA means moving away from a narrow focus on negative emotions and “foreign language classroom anxiety” (FLCA) and toward taking into account learners' positive emotions as well, like “Foreign language enjoyment” (FLE) (MacIntyre & Dewaele, 2014; Li & Dewaele, 2018; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Dewaele et al., 2016; Saito et al., 2018).

This study expands the FLE investigation by considering learner-internal factors in the Saudi context that have not been previously investigated, where English is learned and taught as a foreign language early in elementary school. The participants are 143 Saudi EFL students who answered an online survey about how much they enjoyed their English sessions.

Literature Review

Positive emotions can strengthen one's resilience in the face of adversity and lessen the aftereffects of negative emotional arousal. The "broaden" part of Fredrickson's concept is that happy feelings promote play and exploration as well, opening doors to new experiences and productive learning. Broaden-and-build theory by Fredrickson (2003) suggests that positive emotions can “broaden people’s momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources” (p. 219). Positive emotions also foster play, creativity, exploration and curiosity all of which are very beneficial to learning, according to Fredrickson (2003). The "build" aspect of the idea is intimately related to the social component of good feelings. Optimistic emotions help individuals develop resources that may be generally referred to as

social capital because people are drawn to those who are emotionally positive and because positivity fosters goodwill and social relationships (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Other people's presence provides a wealth of resources that aid in learning since language learners rely on language speakers for assistance (Gardner, 1985; Baker, MacIntyre, Clement, & Conrod, 2001). These speakers include parents, instructors, advanced learners, native speakers, and close peers.

A thorough investigation of positive emotions will likely yield a fresh perspective on the mechanisms at play. Positive emotions have drawn more attention in recent years. Improvements in positive psychology have reinforced the necessity for a more in-depth examination of the role that happiness plays in learning second and foreign languages (see Lake, 2013; Mercer & MacIntyre; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Peterson, 2006). A large portion of psychology has focused on unpleasant, negative experiences, including discrimination, traumatic stress, phobias, severe depression, and the like. This is comparable to the SLA research on effect (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). However, psychology is changing, particularly when understanding the nature and function of positive emotions.

Enjoyment as a positive emotion

The focus of positive psychology is on the transition from the conventional emphasis on what goes wrong, such disorders, deficiencies, and pathology, to what goes well, like strength, wellbeing, and progress (Snyder et al., 2020; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This tendency has also caused applied

linguistics academics to refocus their attention from studying negative emotions to studying both positive and negative emotions in a holistic sense (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). This change is directly responsible for FLE, which has grown to be the most extensively studied positive emotion (MacIntyre, Gregersen et al., 2019). MacIntyre and Dewaele (2014) defined FLE as a state emotion in which psychological needs are satisfied and challenges and skills are balanced. This allowed for the development of the FLE measure, which allowed for the exploration of enjoyment in particular language learning contexts and the clarification of its relationship to other language learning outcomes.

According to MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), good emotions have the ability to counteract the negative impacts of negative emotions, which may impair focus and restrict linguistic intake. According to their theory, contented pupils quickly adapt to the activities in the language classroom, becoming more conscious of the language and better able to absorb the foreign language. Good feelings encourage children to explore and take measured risks that improve social cohesion, which enhances their long-term resilience and toughness. While pleasure may result from carrying out an action or completing one, Boudreau, MacIntyre and Dewaele (2018) separated enjoyment from the more fundamental sensation of pleasure by pointing out that enjoyment involves extra aspects including intellectual concentration, heightened attention, and ideal challenge (p. 153). FLE is necessary in order to have flow experiences in the classroom (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019b).

MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) argued that “positive emotion has a different function from negative emotion; they are not opposite ends of the same spectrum” (p. 193). They contend that students' imaginations have the capacity to positively expand. This viewpoint is in line with Fredrickson's (2001) assertion that happy feelings are more than just the absence of negativity; they actively support health and wellbeing.

In SLA, research on a number of positive emotions has not yet been done. The researcher looked for a positive feeling in the current study to go along with the well-researched negative emotion of FLCA. She chose to make use of delight for a number of reasons. Theoretically, the positive state of flow-a situation in which problems and the ability to handle them are properly aligned-is defined by delight, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Pleasure is a sign that one's psychological requirements are being satisfied. According to the majority of emotion theorists, individuals feel pleasure as their main emotion when they encounter "... desirable outcomes associated with personal achievement and interpersonal relatedness" (Reeve, 2005, p. 316). Joy is the central feeling of the family of emotions that includes enjoyment as a vital member. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), being able to finish a task, focus, having specific objectives, and receiving quick feedback are all necessary for feeling satisfaction. Language learners often express their level of enjoyment (or lack thereof) for a given language-learning task, lesson, or course. Building connections with people and accomplishing goals are the two main sources of satisfaction that come with learning a language on a regular basis.

More recently, some academics have made the case for a more comprehensive understanding of emotions, emphasizing the value of happy feelings in foreign language instruction (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2014; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). One positive emotion that is believed to help L2 learners focus more on, process, and acquire a target language is joy (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). Specific classrooms that have activities that are sufficiently challenging (just beyond the level of L2 learners), creative and unpredictable, have clear benefits and purposes, and where teachers make an effort to assist task completion can foster an environment that is so positive and acquisition-friendly (while providing encouragement, praise, and feedback in a humorous, constant fashion).

Enjoyment in Saudi EFL learners

The literature on FLE in Saudi Arabia is extensive. It focuses on the connections and relationships between the positive and negative emotions that Saudi English language learners experience, as well as the internal and external variables of the learner or teacher and the two aspects of emotions. To meet the scope of this study, the results of only the enjoyment part in the studies mentioned above will be reported.

Bensalem (2021) examines the differences between male and female EFL Saudi undergraduate students' levels of FLE and its relationship with FLCA. Participants were 487 EFL students enrolled at Saudi Arabian public colleges (340 females and 147 males). There were two measures used: one for FLCA based on eight questions from the FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) and the

other for FLE based on evaluations of ten items on a Likert scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). The levels of FLE and FLCA were the same for male and female students. According to correlation analysis, there was a substantial negative association between students' FLCA and FLE. The causes of FLCA and FLE among Saudi EFL learners were identified via a qualitative examination of the participants' educational experiences. Only two FLE questions showed a significant difference between male and female respondents; on these, the former felt more deserving of their English education and the latter thought knowing English is "cool."

The degree and sources of EFL pleasure among 120 Saudi English majors in college were investigated by Kassem (2020). His study also looked at the disparities in pleasure across genders and the relationship between enjoyment and accomplishment, autonomy, and self-efficacy in EFL. A 36-item questionnaire designed by that researcher which measured EFL pleasure, autonomy, self-efficacy, and sources of enjoyment was filled out by the students. The GPAs of the students served as an accomplishment indicator. High levels of satisfaction were linked to pupils "learning English as a FL," according to data analysis. Regarding satisfaction of EFL, there were no differences between male and female students. Enjoyment of EFL was strongly connected with self-efficacy, autonomy, and accomplishment. The knowledge that one was learning a valuable language, the attitudes of the instructors, and the nice environment of the FL classroom were the most often mentioned causes of satisfaction in EFL.

This study examines the positive feeling of enjoyment in Saudi EFL learners using quantitative and qualitative methods. This thorough analysis will illuminate one aspect of the students' emotions. As was mentioned in the literature review above, no research has focused on how much KKU students enjoy learning English.

The following questions are the focus of this study:

1. What is the relationship between the learner's gender, age, mastery of English, level of achievement, education level, and FLE of Saudi EFL learners?
2. What do participants say about their enjoyment of FL classes?

Methodology

Gathering the sample

Convenience sampling was used to get the sample. A volunteer who oversaw the testing of the youngest participants also gathered some data. Most of the data was gathered by means of snowball sampling.

Participants

The online survey was completed by 143 Saudi students enrolled at King Khalid University in addition to three high schools in Abha. The researcher took a number of independent variables from the instrument's demographics section and utilized them to form groups for data analysis.

Gender

About one-third of the respondents ($n = 48$, 33.6%) were men, whereas the rest of the sample ($n = 95$, 66.4 percent) consisted of women. This kind of distribution—where women make up the majority of participants—is rather common for web-based language assessments (Dewaele & Wilson 2010).

Age

“The average age of the respondents was relatively young ($M = 27.5$ years, $SD = 8.5$), ranging from age 15 to 40. The researcher created six age groups: teens ($n = 5$), early twenties ($n = 25$), mid-twenties ($n = 33$), late twenties ($n = 61$), early thirties ($n = 12$), late thirties ($n = 7$).”

Education level

There were five participants with an intermediate high school diploma, twenty-five with a high school diploma, ninety with a bachelor's degree, sixteen with a master's degree, and seven with a doctorate. The sample is educated overall.

Mastery of English

When asked to characterize their level of proficiency with the FL overall, three people (2 percent) identified as beginners, 24 as intermediate (16.8 percent), 63 as high intermediate (44.2 percent), and 53 as advanced (37 percent).

Achievement

One item was used to evaluate achievement, and it asked FL learners to offer their most recent GPA by choosing one of four options: (1- 2, 2- 3, 3- 4, 4- 5), eight (5.6%) reported that their average is (1-2), (2-3) was achieved by 23 (16.1%), forty six (32.2%) participants got (3-4), and sixty six (46.2%) reported that they achieved the highest grade (4 -5).

The instrument

An online questionnaire allowed to include a wide range of respondents. By emailing queries to several lists of language instructors and requesting them to pass the survey to interested colleagues, snowball sampling was used to get the sample. Both Likert-scale and open-ended questions may have data collected using the software that was used.

The demographics portion of the questionnaire, which included the questions mentioned just above, was where it all began. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with 29 items that described the FL class - 21 items that were developed to represent FLE and eight that were taken from the FLCAS - in the section that followed. Likert scales, which have five standard anchors—"absolutely disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, agree = 4, definitely agree = 5" were used to collect responses. Every piece that mentioned FLE used favorable language.

The last open-ended question requested a concentrated answer about a particular enjoyable event that the respondents had experienced (Burns, MacIntyre, & Jessome, 2011). The instructions were: ***“Describe one specific event or episode in your FL class that you really enjoyed and describe your feeling in as much detail as possible.”***

Nine people participated in a pilot test of the questionnaire. As a result, some things were eliminated, and others were reformulated. The completed survey was uploaded to the internet using Google Forms, and instructors from King Khalid University's Faculty of Languages and Translation-both male and female-were asked to transmit the survey to their students.

Data Analysis

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design with a data-validation version was used (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The objective of the quantitative data is to assess the FLE levels of both male and female EFL learners. The analysis of the open-ended qualitative data examines the happy and uneasy sensations of the individuals. The mixed-method study design, according to Creswell & Clark (2011), allows for a deeper level of insight than a single methodology. Creswell and Clark argue that qualitative items “provide the researcher with emergent themes and interesting quotes that can be used to validate and embellish the quantitative survey findings” (p.81).

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. The Internet survey questions were written in English, and all the respondents answered in English only. One hundred and

twenty respondents answered the open question. Initial qualitative datasets may be disorganized and chaotic, as noted by Dörnyei (2007, p. 243), and this research is no exception. The information was manually coded. While some respondents responded to the question by describing individual occurrences, others instead spoke about a pattern of events or how they saw the experience. Considering the exploratory character of this study, the coding method used all available data to create the categories below. Lastly, the participants made an impromptu connection between happiness and other favorable feelings like pride and contentment.

Results:

4.1 Quantitative data

To investigate the impact of the independent (demographic) factors on FLE, many one-way ANOVAs were employed (see Table 1). The researcher discovered that those who had performed better on the FL felt superior to their colleagues, had more advanced educations, and had far higher FLE scores. Age and education level have a significant impact on FLE (see Table 1). Each of these independent factors will be looked at more closely below.

Table 1. The effect of education level, age, sex, achievement on FLE and mastery of English

Dependent Variable	Gender	Age	Education level	Mastery of English	Achievement
FLE	16.07*	15.64*	22.43**	4.15*	26.33

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

4.1.1 Gender

The respondents' gender significantly affected FLE, according to an independent t-test ($t(143) = 2.7, p < .030$) (see Figure 1). Compared to male responses, female participants scored much higher. (female = 3.8; male = 3.3).

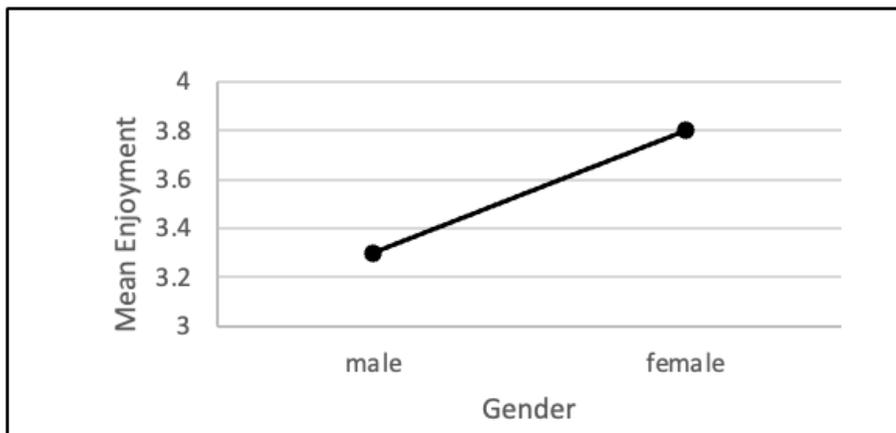


Figure 1. Effect of gender on FLE

4.1.2 Age

The age group has a substantial and powerful impact on FLE ($p < .05$) but with differently shaped patterns among the age groups. Those who are in their late thirties score the highest mean enjoyment level ($p < .021$), followed by the teens who score significantly high as compared to those in their twenties ($p < .043$). FLE levels drop back to early thirties, who score the lowest levels of enjoyment significantly ($p < .033$). With this pattern, we can see a slope in enjoyment levels to the early thirties group while the other five groups score high levels of FLE.

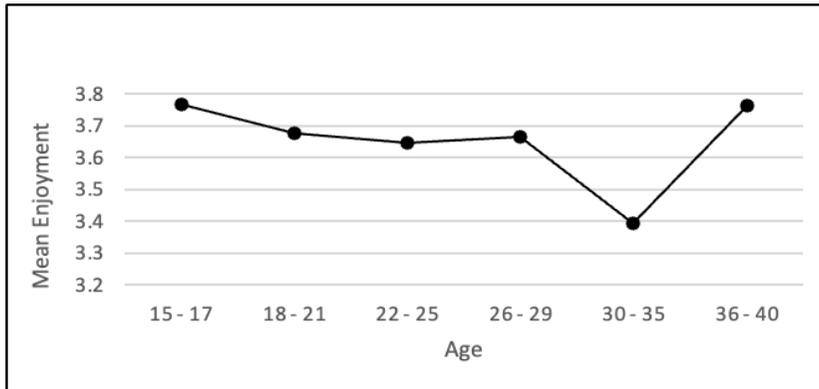


Figure 2. Effect of age on FLE

4.1.3 Education level

When respondents are categorized based on their educational attainment, a shallow slope pattern is produced. Figure 3 illustrates how FLE levels rise dramatically from high school to very advanced BA levels across all educational levels (all $p < .004$). The MA group scored the highest levels of FLE, but the enjoyment levels dropped significantly for PhDs, who scored the second lowest levels of FLE. The difference between the high school and PhDs is marginally significant.

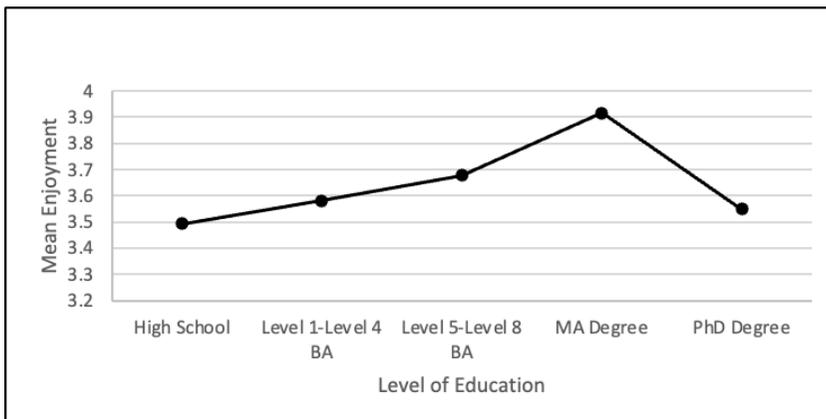


Figure 3. Effect of level of education on FLE

4.1.4 Mastery of English

There is a significant correlation between FLE and the overall degree of English language proficiency, which spans from beginner to advanced ($p < 0.05$). Interestingly, there was a decrease in FLE at the novice level, but the difference between intermediate, low-intermediate, and high-intermediate was negligible (see Figure 4). Remarkably, the advanced group outperformed the beginner's group ($p < .031$) but scored considerably lower on the FLE than the three intermediate levels ($p < .023$).

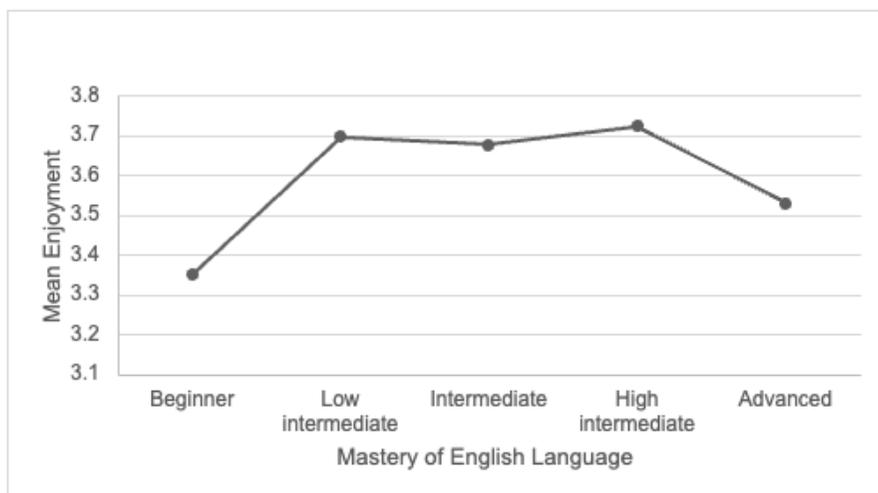


Figure 4. Effect of mastery of English on FLE

4.1.5 Achievement

Regarding the impact of accomplishment in the FL learners' group, a same trend was seen (Figure 5). There is no statistically significant effect of learners' achievement on FLE, although the highest GPA learners group shows the highest value of FLE. The FLE values for those with a 1 to 4 GPA were similar. Although the FLE scores appear to rise in the 4-5 GPA group, the difference *was not statistically significant*.

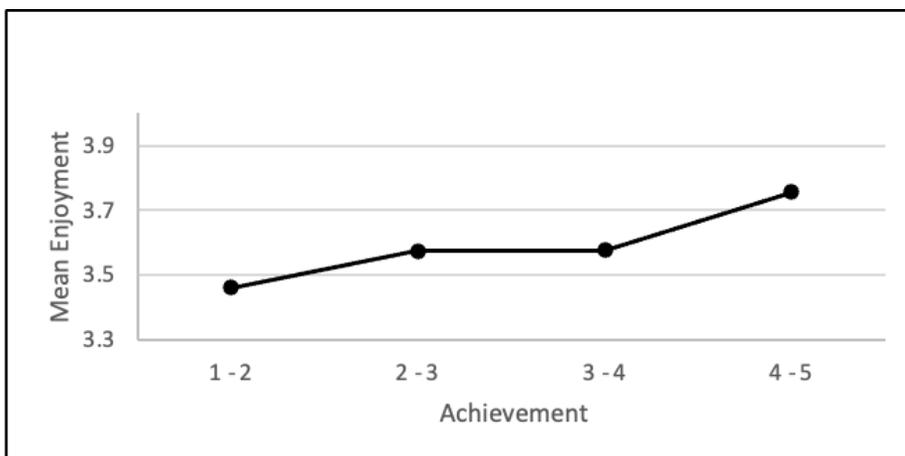


Figure 5. Effect of achievement on FLE

4.2 Qualitative data: Respondents' voice on enjoyable events in the foreign language class

One hundred and nineteen people responded to the unrestricted query (83 percent of the total number). As noted by Doçrınyei (2007, p. 243), preliminary qualitative datasets may be disorganized and disorderly, and ours is no different. Even if the questions on the Internet survey were written in English, respondents answered in both English and Arabic, which made using Nvivo software impossible; consequently, the data was coded manually. While the question asked for precise event descriptions, several respondents instead chose to describe a pattern of events or their views of the experience. The coding process created the following categories using all available data, taking into account the exploratory nature of this research. Finally, the participants spontaneously connected other positive emotions like pride and satisfaction to enjoyment.

Considering that this study is exploratory in nature, the coding method used all available data to create the categories shown below. Lastly, the responders made an impromptu connection between other good feelings like pride, pleasure and enjoyment. The researcher used content analysis to do this: “The qualitative categories used in content analysis are not predetermined but are derived inductively from the data analyzed.” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 245) Hence, the categories were apparent after carefully examining the answers to the open-ended question. Descriptions of particular FL classroom activities were often included in participants' accounts of pleasurable experiences. A couple of the episodes recounted the participant's successes in the classroom, such when their friends laughed or expressed enjoyment at their performance, when the instructor publicly commended their work, or when they got an exceptional mark on a project. The teachers' and classmates' appreciation may be slightly similar. Other episodes focused on moments of individual success, like realizing suddenly that you have done something well and advanced in your FL expertise.

A few of the programmes took place outside of the classroom and showed real people using the FL for technical or interpersonal communication. Ultimately, a new category was created to include all comments that didn't fall into any of the other ones. These were general remarks on language acquisition or tales about gratifying or humiliating incidents that fell outside of any category during the FL class.

Classroom activity, peer perspectives, teacher recognition, progress recognition, teacher skills, and authentic use of FL were

the categories to which the 119 episodes were categorized (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Table 2 lists the main topics in decreasing order of relative quantity and frequency. Among the categories, classroom activity stands out as the one to which two-fifths of the episodes were classified. Presenting in class and having class discussions were the two most common activities. The category of Peer perceptions followed with around 20% of testimonies. The other categories, which make up around 10% of the total number of episodes, are Other, Teacher skills, Recognition of progress, and Authentic use of FL. The researcher selected the most poignant, fascinating, and category-representative data excerpts. The excerpts do a wonderful job of capturing the participant in context, with the delight coming from a special combination of internal and external elements.

Table 2 The primary motifs found in 119 participants' evaluations of entertaining FL episodes.

Theme	Frequency	%
Classroom activities	42	35.3
Peer perception	25	21
Recognition of progress	23	18.1
Teacher skills	12	10
Authentic use of FL	9	7.6
Other (e.g., embarrassment, satisfaction)	8	6.7

The subcategories of the qualitative data will not be thoroughly reported; only a sampling of the responses will be offered.

4.2.1 Classroom activities

Participants talked about their favorite FL classroom activities, including role-plays, debates, games, and presentations. One student recalls her first experience presenting on her own in front of her peers. The usual feeling of nervousness she had at the beginning and how she turned it into self-success and confidence:

One year ago, I had to give a presentation on the importance of water. When I came up to speak, I had that feeling of fear and nervousness of my own friend. I laugh at myself inside of me, that time I change the feelings upside down from sadness and I will fail in my presentation to feeling that I will be a teacher one day and give a nice speech to my colleagues. That feeling makes me prouder of myself and keep going for what I believe. (F, BA, 17)

Playing games while learning FL is one of the most enjoyable class activities. Another student appreciated the learning when they played a game directed by the teacher on counting numbers in English:

In my first class of vocabulary building, we had a lesson on numbers. The teacher let the students play a game by counting numbers shown on cards: the first student counted the first number and the second student count the second number. The counting was going on until a student made a mistake and she was

excluded. The last one won the game as she counted all numbers correct. It was fun and helpful helping us to remember the numbers. (F, BA, 18)

Class debates can also be intellectually stimulating as they allow students freedom of speaking. This high school student enjoyed a lot by talking about her city in the speaking class while using English:

I enjoyed a lot when I talked about the city of Abha in English in the speaking class, and I very much enjoyed talking about my city in a language other than my mother tongue, one of the situations that made me love the English language the most. (F, HS, 16)

4.2.2 Peer perception

Some respondents' testimonies indicated that classmates have helped them overcome obstacles in speaking in front of their peers. An MA student generally stated the effect of classroom debates in evoking speaking skills:

Engaging in classroom debates is a fun and exciting experience for many students. They feel a mix of excitement and nervousness but enjoy practicing their speaking skills and expressing their opinions. It's a memorable and confidence-boosting activity in English class. (M, MA, 23)

The postgraduates also enjoy discussing some of the difficulties with their colleagues having the same challenges:

I enjoyed discussing the PhD-errs struggles and the way that no one is interested in reading their thesis. I liked the way that we openly discussed related issues/matters to us as PhD students! (M, PhD, 29)

4.2.3 Recognition of progress

This category contains extracts where participants reported their realization of self-progress. One participant recognized his English language improvement by watching movies in English without Arabic subtitles.

I love English classes in general, but in specific I enjoyed when my teacher played some movies or games in English non-subtitled, I feel I'm one of them, living the moment. Honestly, I wish the class did not end but it made me excited for the next classes. (M, BA, 17)

Some respondents recognized their development in FL by learning new information or pronunciation of new words:

When I learn new information about the language or the way to speak it, I find it very interesting, and I become interested in a specific subject related to the language. It is very interesting and full of clear, easy-to-understand information. I also like learning new, rare words in the language. (F, MA, 26)

4.2.4 Authentic use of FL

Episodes of real-world applications of FL, which usually take place outside of the classroom, are included in this category. A few individuals said that using technology in English improves their FLE. One participant enjoyed joining English and technology while playing games on applications that are available on most devices:

When we integrate technology in the learning process such as using learning apps and using games to learn such as Kahoot. I feel so satisfied and not bored. I also feel that I'm happy because technology makes me feel so advanced away from using traditional ways to learn. So, the happiness increases and the boring levels decrease and at the end I learn with happy feeling! (F, BA, 19)

A different respondent hopes to continue her postgraduate studies in English as she enjoyed conducting research in English:

I like to learn English as a language because it is interesting and easy. I also prefer to research more about this language. I want to be a specialist in one of the English fields. I want to complete my master degree in Applied Linguistics because I feel fun when I learn Applied Linguistics more than theoretical linguistics. I usually search about the theories and hypotheses of this field. (F, BA, 18)

4.2.5 Other

This category contains several situations the participants reported where they had feelings other than enjoyment. Some participants reported embarrassing or satisfying episodes occurred particularly at lower levels of their studies of English:

Embarrassment

There was an embarrassing situation in my first year at university. I was sad because everything was in the English language while my skills were not very good. When I saw my colleagues in the class were responding to the teacher and understanding what she was saying, I had a strong motivation to learn the English language and thought I became more fluent. However, the teacher asked a question and I suddenly got up to participate but couldn't answer. (F, BA, 19)

Satisfaction

In writing class in my very first semester, the teacher asked us to write so she could see how well we are writing so we wrote and I submitted it to her and she was very happy about my writing skills and I felt so proud of myself. (M, High School, 16)

4.2.6 Teacher skills

Observations on the teacher's efforts to create a fun and engaging environment in the FL class are included in this area.

Because they chronicle the instructors' actions over time rather than at a single moment, a number of episodes are lengthier than those in other categories. Teacher's encouragement and support, for instance, are prominently appreciated.

Phonetics class with Dr. X.: He made us practice writing transcriptions of words on the board. I was so excited and a bit scared. However, I really enjoyed the class, and it was the best class I've ever taken. (M, BA, 18)

Participants also mentioned the benefit of being allowed to speak individually:

I enjoyed the public speaking workshop class with Ms. X. It was a very fun and creative class. The teacher was very supportive and positive, and the general atmosphere was positive for all the students. (F, BA, 17)

The teacher's sense of humor helps to invoke the enjoyment in the class, which therefore enhances the teacher-student relationship:

I enjoyed it when the teacher shared some jokes unexpectedly during the class. This changes the environment, creates a good relationship between the teacher and students, moreover, makes me awake and focus all the time. (F, BA, 18)

Discussion:

This study explores the impact of several independent variables on the enjoyment of foreign language classes in the Saudi context. The findings contribute to our understanding of the various positive mood patterns among FL learners. Participants reported significantly elevated levels of FLE overall. Furthermore, the FLE score distributions showed reduced fluctuation around the mean and consistently high levels of satisfaction. These findings show that FL students generally enjoyed their FL lessons.

Many language specialists may find hope in the pattern of the data, particularly in the greater score for the positive feeling (enjoyment). According to the philosophy of positive emotion, having fun, being creative, and pushing oneself are all related to pleasure (Fredrickson, 2001). Because play has been linked to promoting social ties and brain development, Fredrickson's theories imply that feeling delight and playfulness in language may be a considerably facilitating experience for language learners. Pleasure and the fun actions that go along with it, even in adults, provide a secure psychological foundation from which to explore a foreign language and cultural environment. Fun may hold the emotional key to releasing both adults' and kids' full language learning potential; if a mentor, parent, teacher, or friend can make learning fun, they've probably already made a big difference in the learning process. The strength of a positive-broadening emotion is found in the widely defined resources that are developed during play, such as particular abilities and interpersonal relationships, as suggested by Fredrickson (2001,

2013). These resources last long after the initial happy sensation fades (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

It is important to exercise caution when evaluating the study's findings. The sample is modest but mostly self-selected and well-educated. If a relevant sample could be defined, it most likely does not represent the entire population of Saudi FL learners. It is evident that the respondents have a favorable bias in favor of FL learning: even if they were still enrolled in a language school, FL learners who despise FLs would probably not want to spend fifteen to twenty minutes responding to an online questionnaire on FL learning. Furthermore, only the most motivated FL students will likely continue studying FLs through graduation. However, the current sample's wide range provides at least some protection during sampling.

A number of demographics, semi-biographical, and FL-related characteristics were examined in the first set of the study questions. The researcher was able to determine the impact of gender, age group, education level, and FL mastery on FLE by a series of ANOVAs. Most readers won't likely be surprised by the following findings: Individuals who felt more skilled than their colleagues, had advanced in the FL, were older, had previously mastered the English language, and reported much higher FLE levels. In line with Kassem's (2020) results, the findings of this study revealed a significant correlation between FLE and the level of achievement measured by the student's GPA. More specifically, the higher the GPA score was, the higher the FLE level had been found.

Contrary to previous studies (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), the highest level of education is not linked to the highest levels of FLE. Findings showed that the MA group scored the highest level of enjoyment, whereas the PhDs gained the second lowest level of FLE, following the high school students. This result reflected that these two groups, i.e., high school students and PhDs, might experience struggles affecting or reducing their enjoyment of FL classes.

There were notable gender disparities in the respondents' FLE scores: female participants outscored male participants. As a result, the female participants in the FL class felt good. In fact, stereotypes suggest that women are more emotionally invested in their relationships and are superior FL learners than men (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Chaplin & Aldao, 2013; Dewaele, Botes, & Greiff, 2023; Dewaele et al., 2016). The female participants' higher FLE scores are interesting because they support the idea that having greater happy and negative emotions co-occur during FL learning might be better than having weaker emotions overall (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

These findings support the recent results of Dewaele and Greiff (2023), who discovered that female participants in the FL class had more levels of pleasure, pride, enjoyment, excitement, and curiosity. This allowed them to be more creative and develop into "cool" bilinguals. The observations mentioned above and experiences give life to the statistical conclusions. Students described in their own words how they felt more confident and motivated to do well in the FL class after receiving a good grade on an essay, how using the FL may help people feel pleased; how

studying with peers fosters social relationships and is enjoyable; and how playing entertaining and thought-provoking games in the FL class can inspire students to be more creative and motivated. These specific circumstances are consistent with the findings of Chaplin and Aldao (2013), who discovered that girls, especially during adolescence, a stage of life that is typically marked by emotional ups and downs, exhibit more internalizing and positive emotions (sadness, anxiety, and sympathy) than do boys. As our participants' responses show, this clearly does not imply guys cannot feel identical feelings. It is important to exercise caution when interpreting gender differences by avoiding conceptualizing the data in mutually exclusive categories. Instead, we should consider baseline differences between groups significantly influenced by individual experiences, resulting in a wide range of scores within each group and significant overlap between groups.

The themes that surfaced in the FL class's enjoyable events were the focus of the second research question. To augment the earlier research that looked at students' accounts of their experiences with anxiety, The researcher utilized the qualitative data of the 119 participants who responded to the open-ended question on pleasure (Burns, MacIntyre, & Jessome, 2011; Cohen & Norst, 1989; Price, 1991). The answers indicated that certain happy experiences may influence how pleasure develops in the FL. Foreign language learners enjoyed novel activities, such as writing short stories, playing games, participating in class debates and discussions, or preparing group or individual presentations. Usually, these were events that gave students more freedom to choose, such as picking a discussion or debate subject

that was pertinent to their interests and concerns. Instead of being seen as passive consumers of information, learners expressed a need for autonomy and the freedom to use their creativity to advance in the FL (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Arnold (2011) noted that choice often serves as a motivator. Instructors may inspire students when they give them a comfortable level of choice in their lessons. Because group projects may provide a variety of possibilities and demand a range of talents, they present an especially rich set of possible choices (Arnold, 2011).

The setting of the classroom might encourage enjoyment. Students particularly valued professors who were upbeat, funny, content, orderly, appreciative of their learning and gave them rewards for well-done work. Teachers were forgiven by respondents for their light-hearted jokes and for sharing giggles when they erred. When things do not go according to plan, students might benefit from the beneficial release of negative emotional tension when they laugh. The qualitative data indicates a close relationship between professors and students' FLE (Arnold, 2011). Peers can also facilitate enjoyment. A smaller group size in the FL class may also be beneficial since it fosters stronger social ties, a more favorable informal environment, and more regular usage of the FL.

The opinions of the respondents supported Arnold's (2011) finding that the best path to happiness and self-worth is to experience genuine success. The joyful experiences that the participants recounted often came about as a consequence of a protracted and intense effort directed toward a particular objective, such speaking fluently or interacting with native

speakers (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The participants saw these as acknowledgements of their advancement and hard work. Naturally, educators need to address any negative feelings and self-perceptions that students may have since they might impede their growth and promote realistically optimistic self-perceptions (Arnold, 2011). While engaging in side chats with classmates may be a fun diversion from dry lectures, it can also be disruptive in the classroom. A setting that is both exciting and non-threatening is ideal for the FL classroom (Dewaele, 2005, 2011; Arnold, 2011; Nelson & Murphey, 2011; MacIntyre, 1999). Overestimating the influence of classroom dynamics is difficult. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003, pp. 3-4) pointed out that in “. . . a ‘good’ group, the L2 classroom can turn out to be such a pleasant and inspiring environment that the time spent there is a constant source of success and satisfaction for teachers and learners alike.” Many of the insights made by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2014) on how FL instructors may increase student pleasure in the FL are reflected in these data.

It is crucial to use caution when interpreting these statements and avoid hastily categorizing them into "rules" of efficient teaching and learning. Since the aforementioned actions took place in specific contexts, each responder is positioned inside a distinct setting and experienced delight in them. In comparing circumstances that result in a high and low readiness to communicate, MacIntyre et al. (2011) pointed out that the variations in circumstances that encourage a good or negative emotional response are often rather minor and have the capacity to change at any time.

Conclusion:

This study provides more statistical support for the idea that learner-related factors and FL satisfaction are related. Narrative materials about enjoyable moments in the FL class demonstrated a variety of factors, from teachers' professional and emotional qualities to a helpful and caring peer group, that led to participants' FLE. The adage "we have to learn to walk before we can run" seems well-known to many participants. Their adventures were centered around their initial triumphant steps or convincing runs in the FL, which gave them a sense of accomplishment and pride.

There are certain restrictions with this research. If a significant sample could be identified, it probably does not reflect the whole population of FL learners. The main drawback is that because the dimensions under investigation were not controlled, other factors that may have affected the results, including culture, learning environment, and individual variations, may have been involved. Furthermore, this research only used self-reported instruments, or questionnaires. According to Dörnyei (2003), surveys have some drawbacks, such as the possibility that respondents' fatigue, unwillingness, lack of seriousness, and lack of responsibility while answering them may have affected their responses. Therefore, it is recommended that this research be continued utilizing other data collecting methods (such as observations and interviews) and adjusted for any issues resulting from the use of self-reported instruments. Because control and value assessments are regarded as domain-specific (Goetz et al., 2006), care must be taken when extrapolating the results. Lastly, further studies may look at the possible influence of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors from other elements—like sponsors, families, and school leaders.

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