

Review on Foreign Language Enjoyment and Its Pedagogical Implications

Cao Xi (Corresponding author)

Shanghai International Studies University

Shanghai, China

E-mail: caoxi815@shisu.edu.cn

Fu Yu

Shanghai International Studies University

Shanghai, China

Received: December 27, 2021

Accepted: January 22, 2022

Published: April 15, 2022

doi:10.5296/ijl.v14i2.19392

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v14i2.19392>

Abstract

This paper aims to review empirical and theoretical studies on foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and their application in language education research. Under the framework of positive psychology, this paper introduces the underlying dimensions and main tenet of FLE. Then it takes a closer look at how individual and social variables influence FLE. Subsequently, potential theoretical and pedagogical implications are provided. In the end, the limitations of studies in this domain are indicated, and suggestions for future studies are provided to extend the boundaries of the researches of FLE.

Keywords: Positive psychology, Foreign language enjoyment, Language education

1. Introduction

Positive psychology was introduced into the study of FLL and SLA when Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) urged the shift of research focus on positive emotions (Jin & Zhang, 2021). This shift represented a departure from negative-emotion-oriented research tradition, and echoing of the holistic study of both positive and negative emotions in foreign language learning (FLL). From then on, theoretical and empirical investigations that expressly target positive emotions in FLL have emerged. Among the positive emotions, such as grit, resilience, enjoyment, love, that have been examined, enjoyment has received relatively broad attention

form scholars. (De Ruiter et al., 2019; Kirk et al., 2021; Raccanello et al., 2019; Sevinç & Dewaele, 2018)

FLE, being trait-like emotion, triggered by a specific learning situation and conceived sense of well-being to specific situations within an academic context, is the prerequisites for learning success (Dewaele et al., 2018; Li et al., 2018; Richter et al., 2016). With regard to the measurement of FLE, based on Intrinsic Motivation Inventory, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) developed the initial FLE scale containing items related to learning experience, peer emotion and perceived feeling of teachers. In subsequent study, by correlation analysis of the same database, they further explored two additional dimension, FLE-social and FLE-private. In the context of Chinese high schools, Li, Jiang and Dewaele (2018) modified the 21-item scale into an 11-item version comprising items related to FLE-Social, FLE-Private, and FLE-atmosphere. (Zhang et al., 2021)

Recent years have seen the flourishing trend on the FLE researches. As far, scholars have examined its underlying dimensions ((Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Li et al., 2018); its individual and social variables(Richter et al., 2016) as well as its associations with foreign language anxiety(FLA) (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016) These studies have confirmed that enjoyment is positively related to creative learning, problem- solving strategies, activation of cognitive resources, and improved learning outcomes. (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Pekrun, 2006; Richter et al., 2016).

To enrich the literature on FLL-related enjoyment, this study aims to review not only its underlying dimensions and variables, but also how they demonstrated in online FLL. This review could extend our understanding of FLL-related enjoyment and shed light on pedagogical implications and future researches.

2. FLE as a Dynamic Construct

Researchers have explored different versions of FLE scales to explore social and individual dimensions in Saudi Arabia, Spain, and China respectively. (De Ruiter et al., 2019; Dewaele et al., 2018; Li et al., 2018b) Based on their findings, FLE is a construct linked to a number of components: participants' perception of their relative level of proficiency within the FL classroom, number of languages known, education level age, general level of the FL and cultural background. (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016)

Besides the underlying dimensions of FLE, employing idiodynamic approach, together with questionnaires and self-reports, scholars have identified that FLE, as holistic and non-linear changing positive emotion, is found to be partially correlated with but essentially different experiences from anxiety. (De Ruiter et al., 2019; De Smet et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016) Therefore, enjoyment and anxiety are metaphorically referred to as the right and left feet, but not the two faces of Janus. (Dewaele, 2014, 2016) In addition, FLE is also found to be dynamic. For instance, Yoshida (2020) identified fluctuation of FEL in conversation with native speakers. In this study, participants were engaged in a conversation involving both easy and difficult topics, and were asked to self-rate their moments of experiencing enjoyment during the conversation. The results confirmed the moment-to

moment change of FLE and identified both the inter- and intra-individual differences of enjoyment.

3. FLE as a Product of Individual and Social Variables

Given the great diversity of learner populations and variables, FLE is proved to be related to demographic variables such as gender and age; as well as psychological variable, such as self-efficacy, grit and degree of multilingualism. Therefore, empirical research on individual variables of FLE can be categorized into demographic variables and psychological variables.

With regard to demographic variables, recent years have witnessed increasing studies on the effects of age and genders on FLE. These studies found positive correlation of age and learners' FLE. (Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Liu & Hong, 2021) and inconsistent roles of gender on FLE. (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Mierzwa, 2018; Alenezi, 2020; Liu & Hong, 2021) For example, by mixed-method approach, Liu & Hong (2021) examined the mediating role of FLE in age and gender of Chinese young learners. Consistent with previous findings, the level of FLE of female students is proved to be higher than that of males. (Dewaele et al., 2018; Liu & Hong, 2021); moreover, their findings also suggested that students above 7th grades tend to feel more joyful than students below 7th grades (grade 7 was the dividing year). Whereas, contrary to their studies, insignificant difference of gender was found in terms of FLE. (Alenezi, 2020; Mierzwa, 2018)

Empirical studies also investigated the correlation of FLE between other positive emotions, such as grit, motivation and learning-styles. These studies have indicated that positive emotions, learning outcomes and FLE were positively correlated with each other. (An et al., 2021; E. Liu & Wang, 2021) For instance, to investigate whether the discrepancy of students' aspiration and obligation led to enjoyment and motivation in foreign language writing classes, Tahmouresi & Papi (2021), by collecting data of self-rated scale of proficiency and open questionnaires, found that L2 enjoyment positively predicted L2 writing motivation and performance. As for learning styles, studies indicated that active-style students' learning enjoyment was significantly higher than that of the reflective-style students (Hwang et al., 2019).

Due to the authentic material, and entirely different modalities of classroom activities in computer-mediated language learning, enjoyment, found to be all occur within the shortly media experience, positively affected by feedback and intrinsic motivation (Benitez-Galbraith & Galbraith, 2021; Kamenická 2021; Kirk et al., 2021; Lee, 2020) For instance, aiming to investigate the impacts of learner factors (e.g., clear goal and resilience) and contextual factors (e.g., playability and feedback) on learners' enjoyment, a survey was conducted to examine participants' flow experience when using Baicizhan, a digital game-based vocabulary learning app. Results demonstrated that playability provided by Baicizhan has a positive effect on enjoyment which, in turn, enhanced perceived learning and motivation. (C. Li et al., 2018b; R. Li et al., 2021)

With regard to studies of FLE in online language education during the pandemic, researchers have examined the influence of FLE on both individual-related and social-culturally-related

factors, such as learning styles (Lee et al., 2021; Yoshida, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021), cognition (Hwang et al., 2019), learning experiences (Fraschini & Tao, 2021) cultural context (M. Liu & Hong, 2021; L. Zhang & Tsung, 2021) in online language learning. Besides the correlation of FLE with positive emotions as well as its dynamic features verified in normal times, new findings indicated that blended use of information and communication technologies in online learning environment may reduce loneliness triggered by social distance and maintain friendly sustainable online learning atmosphere. Maican & Cocoradă (2021) For instance, Hwang et al., (2019) adopted a quasi-experiment to compare the effects of three versions of captions related to FLE in mobile-assisted language learning interfaces. Results showed that full English caption contributed to significantly highest level of motivation and FLE. In terms of triggers of FLE of online collaborative language learning, by analyzing seven-week self-reports of text chats with native Japanese speakers, Yoshida (2020) found that chat partners and discussion of hobbies, similar interests are triggers of FLE during online collaborative writing.

4. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

In this review, we sketched FLE and its main tenets, its correlation with both internal and external factors as well as its dynamic feature. In this section, we will illustrate how FLE pedagogically contributes to foreign language learning as it potentially enlightens the functioning of different stakeholders in this domain.

Good pedagogical practices are crucial to boost students' FLE, motivation and achievement, for which teachers are playing the central role. To maintain a friendly and enlightening learning environment, teachers should use non-threatening techniques to create a positive FL learning experience. Moreover, promoting group solidarity by designing interactive activities is also encouraged to create an emotionally safe classroom environment.

Due to the mixing emotions occurring in the process of learning, teachers who pay attention to creating joyful learning environment where something is at stake, have to accept that some anxiety may come along for the enjoyment, especially for the female learners. (Dewaele et al, 2016) In terms of this, teachers are suggested to stimulate positive emotions and increase students' resilience to anxiety in learning situations. With regard to dynamic existence of FLE, teachers are advised not only to concentrate on students' language knowledge, such as grammar and vocabulary, but also to focus on students' emotional experiences and to make constant effort to maintain students' enjoyment. (Zhang, Liu and Lee, 2020)

To create an enjoyable and active online learning environment in the pandemic era, teachers are encouraged to introduce technologies such as video-conferences, online lectures and e-learning platforms into their teaching to reduce students' feeling of isolation and distress when social distance is a requirement in pandemic era. (Maican and Cocorada, 2021)

5. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

It should be acknowledged that there are some limitations in the studies conducted in the domain of FLE. Firstly, not all the factors of FLE are equally explored. (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021) While the fluctuation of FLE has been extensively investigated, other factors such as

the institutional variables of FLE, have been underrepresented. (Talebzadeh et al., 2020) Future studies may give an in-depth review on studies of FLE as well as studies on FLE of online environments.

Due to the fact that individual and institutional variables contribute to the flourishing of FLE, it is incumbent for researchers to study these factors across culture, educational context, teachers' instructional experiences to understand how they interact with FLE to affect learners' academic achievement. In addition, empirical studies of FLE have been mainly quantitative, using self-report surveys and questionnaires to examine participants' perceptions. Nevertheless, due to some limitations inherent to this type of data, such as participants bias, and lack of real-time data, researchers are advised to employ more qualitative and mixed-methods research to give more in-depth researches of FLE. (Wang et al., 2021) Future research may use more sophisticated statistical tools, such as discriminant function analysis, structural equation modelling, or response surface modelling. And a more dynamic approach regarding moment-to-moment changes in FLE may provide nuance to the overall effect size. (Botes et al., 2020) Moreover, research of FLE of online education are mainly conducted in university settings so more studies are needed to examine online FLE in high school and primary school settings. In terms of measurement, future research could manipulate physiological measures such as eye movement, EEG and fMRI to identify learners' emotions.

References

Alenezi, S. M. (2020). Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety among the Northern Borders University EFL Students: Links to Gender and Major. <https://doi.org/10.21608/jsrep.2020.86081>

An, Z., Wang, C., Li, S., Gan, Z., & Li, H. (2021). Technology-Assisted Self-Regulated English Language Learning: Associations With English Language Self-Efficacy, English Enjoyment, and Learning Outcomes. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 558466. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.558466>

Benitez-Galbraith, J., & Galbraith, C. S. (2021). Narrative Engagement, Enjoyment, Learning and Theme Comprehension: Using an Authentic Music Video in an Introductory College Language Classroom. *RELC Journal, 52*(3), 397-411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219874136>

Botes, E., Dewaele, J.-M., & Greiff, S. (2020). The Power to Improve: Effects of Multilingualism and Perceived Proficiency on Enjoyment and Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics, 8*(2), 279-306. <https://doi.org/10.1515/eujal-2020-0003>

De Ruiter, N. M. P., Elahi Shirvan, M., & Talebzadeh, N. (2019). Emotional Processes of Foreign-Language Learning Situated in Real-Time Teacher Support. *Ecological Psychology, 31*(2), 127-145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10407413.2018.1554368>

De Smet, A., Mettwie, L., Galand, B., Hiligsmann, P., & Van Mensel, L. (2018). Classroom anxiety and enjoyment in CLIL and non-CLIL: Does the target language matter?. *Studies in*

Second Language Learning and Teaching, 8(1), 47-71.
<https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2018.8.1.3>

Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4(2), 237-274. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.2.5>

Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2016). 9 Foreign Language Enjoyment and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety: The Right and Left Feet of the Language Learner. In P. D. MacIntyre, T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *Positive Psychology in SLA* (pp. 215-236). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783095360-010>

Dewaele, J.-M., MacIntyre, P., Boudreau, C., & Dewaele, L. (2016). Do girls have all the fun? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition*, 1, 41-63.

Dewaele, J.-M., Witney, J., Saito, K., & Dewaele, L. (2018). Foreign language enjoyment and anxiety: The effect of teacher and learner variables. *Language Teaching Research*, 22(6), 676-697. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168817692161>

Fraschini, N., & Tao, Y. (2021). Emotions in online language learning: Exploratory findings from an *ab initio* Korean course. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1968875>

Hwang, G.-J., Hsu, T.-C., & Hsieh, Y.-H. (2019). Impacts of Different Smartphone Caption/Subtitle Mechanisms on English Listening Performance and Perceptions of Students with Different Learning Styles. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 35(4-5), 333-344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2018.1543091>

Jin, Y., & Zhang, L. J. (2021). The dimensions of foreign language classroom enjoyment and their effect on foreign language achievement. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 24(7), 948-962. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1526253>

Kamenická, J. (2021). Apple Tree Model of Emotion-Involved Processing: Videos for Emotions and Foreign Language Learning. *Journal of Education Culture and Society*, 12(1), 103-116. <https://doi.org/10.15503/jecs2021.1.103.116>

Kirk, S., Grinstead, J., & Nibert, H. J. (2021). Anxiety, lexicon, and morphosyntax in instructed L2 Spanish. *Foreign Language Annals*, flan.12576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12576>

Lee, J. S. (2020). The role of grit and classroom enjoyment in EFL learners' willingness to communicate. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1746319>

Lee, J. S., Xie, Q., & Lee, K. (2021). Informal digital learning of English and L2 willingness to communicate: Roles of emotions, gender, and educational stage. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1918699>

- Li, C., Jiang, G., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2018a). Understanding Chinese high school students' Foreign Language Enjoyment: Validation of the Chinese version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment scale. *System*, 76, 183-196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.06.004>
- Li, C., Jiang, G., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2018b). Understanding Chinese high school students' Foreign Language Enjoyment: Validation of the Chinese version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment scale. *System*, 76, 183-196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.06.004>
- Li, H. (2021). The Predictive Effects of Foreign Language Enjoyment, Anxiety and Boredom on Learning Outcomes in Online English Classroom. *Modern Foreign Languages*, 45(2), 207-221.
- Li, R., Meng, Z., Tian, M., Zhang, Z., & Xiao, W. (2021). Modelling Chinese EFL learners' flow experiences in digital game-based vocabulary learning: The roles of learner and contextual factors. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 34(4), 483-505. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1619585>
- Liu, E., & Wang, J. (2021). Examining the Relationship Between Grit and Foreign Language Performance: Enjoyment and Anxiety as Mediators. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 666892. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.666892>
- Liu, M., & Hong, M. (2021). English Language Classroom Anxiety and Enjoyment in Chinese Young Learners. *SAGE Open*, 11(4), 215824402110475. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211047550>
- Maican, M.-A., & Cocoradă, E. (2021). Online Foreign Language Learning in Higher Education and Its Correlates during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 781. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020781>
- Mierzwa, E. (2018). The Relationship Between Foreign Language Enjoyment and Gender Among Secondary Grammar School Students. *Journal of Education Culture and Society*, 9(2), 117-135. <https://doi.org/10.15503/jecs20182.117.135>
- Pekrun, R. (2006). The Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions: Assumptions, Corollaries, and Implications for Educational Research and Practice. *Educational Psychology Review*, 18(4), 315-341. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-006-9029-9>
- Raccanello, D., Brondino, M., Moè A., Stupnisky, R., & Lichtenfeld, S. (2019). Enjoyment, Boredom, Anxiety in Elementary Schools in Two Domains: Relations With Achievement. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 87(3), 449-469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2018.1448747>
- Richter, D., Lehl, S., & Weinert, S. (2016). Enjoyment of learning and learning effort in primary school: The significance of child individual characteristics and stimulation at home and at preschool. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(1), 96-116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1013950>
- Sevinç, Y., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2018). Heritage language anxiety and majority language anxiety among Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Bilingualism*,

22(2), 159-179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006916661635>

Tahmouresi, S., & Papi, M. (2021). Future selves, enjoyment and anxiety as predictors of L2 writing achievement. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 53, 100837. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2021.100837>

Talebzadeh, N., Elahi Shirvan, M., & Khajavy, G. H. (2020). Dynamics and mechanisms of foreign language enjoyment contagion. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 14(5), 399-420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2019.1614184>

Wang, Y-L., Derakhshan, A., & Zhang, L-J., (2021). Researching and practicing positive psychology in second/foreign language learning and teaching: The past, current status and future directions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 731721. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.731721>

Yoshida, R. (2020). Learners' emotions in foreign language text chats with native speakers. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2020.1818787>

Zhang, L., & Tsung, L. (2021). Learning Chinese as a second language in China: Positive emotions and enjoyment. *System*, 96, 102410. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102410>

Zhang, Z., Liu, T., & Lee, C. B. (2021). Language learners' enjoyment and emotion regulation in online collaborative learning. *System*, 98, 102478. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102478>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)