

العلاقة بين الاتجاهات نحو اللغة الأجنبية ودرجة الاستمتاع والقلق في فصول اللغة الأجنبية لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية السعوديين

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الملخص

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في العلاقة بين الاتجاهات نحو اللغة الإنجليزية، والقلق الدراسي، وكذلك مستوى الاستمتاع باللغة الأجنبية في الفصول الدراسية السعودية، كما تم دراسة تأثير متغيرات الجنس والعمر. شارك في الدراسة 235 طالبًا وطالبة يقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الملك خالد. قام المشاركون بتعبئة استبانة عبر الإنترنت باستخدام مقياس (ليكرت) لكل من مقياس (هورويتز، وهورويتز، وكوب، 1986) لقياس درجة القلق الدراسي بالإضافة إلى مقياس درجة الاستمتاع المستخدم من قبل (دوايل، وماكلينتينر، 2014). تمت إضافة سؤال مفتوح حول أسباب القلق الدراسي لجمع البيانات السردية. أظهرت نتائج التحليل الإحصائي أن هناك علاقة سلبية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين درجة الاستمتاع باللغة الأجنبية ودرجة القلق في فصول دراسة اللغة الأجنبية. كما أظهرت النتائج أن مستويات الاستمتاع لدى المشاركين كانت أكبر بكثير من مستويات القلق. تفوّقت المشاركات الإناث على نظرائهن من الذكور من حيث مستويات الاستمتاع والقلق في الفصول الدراسية للغة الأجنبية. علاوة على ذلك، ومن الناحية الإحصائية، كان المشاركون الأصغر سنًا هم الأقل قلقًا والأكثر استمتاعًا. أظهرت إجابات المشاركين عن السؤال المفتوح أن شخصية المعلم والقدرة التنافسية بين الأقران زادت من نسبة القلق الدراسي لديهم. كما ارتبطت التقييمات الأعلى للاتجاهات نحو اللغة الأجنبية بانخفاض مستويات القلق الدراسي. ولذلك فإن هذا التأثير الإيجابي لاتجاهات الطلاب نحو اللغة الأجنبية الذي أسهم في انخفاض القلق الدراسي لديهم قد يدعم تعلّم وتدرّس اللغة الأجنبية في السياق السعودي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستمتاع باللغة الأجنبية، القلق داخل الفصل الدراسي، المواقف تجاه اللغة الأجنبية، الطلبة السعوديون.

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The Correlation between Attitudes Towards Foreign Language, Enjoyment, and Anxiety in the Foreign Language Classroom for Saudi EFL Students

Hessa Moetik Alshahrani*

Abstract

The current study investigates the association between attitudes towards foreign language (FL) in Saudi classroom settings, FL Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), as well as FLE (Foreign Language Enjoyment). The effects of gender and age variables have been also examined. Participants are 235 undergraduate and graduate learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) at King Khalid University. They participated in an online survey using a Likert scale. Both a measure of FLCA based on 8 questions taken from the FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) as well as a measure of FLE on the basis of twenty-one items (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) were utilized. An open-ended question on FLCA was added to provide narrative data. Statistical findings showed that there was a significant negative correlation between foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). More specifically, the results of statistical analysis showed that FLE levels were substantially greater than FLCA levels. For gender differences, female participants outperformed their male contemporaries, in terms of FLE and FLCA scale scores. Moreover, the youngest participants were statistically the least anxious and the most satisfied. Higher ratings on attitudes towards the FL were correlated with lower FLCA levels. Testimonies of participants demonstrated that teacher's personality, and competitiveness among peers heightened their classroom anxiety. The positive attitudes impact on lowering FLCA found in this research may support teaching and learning the FL in Saudi context.

Keywords: foreign language enjoyment, foreign language classroom anxiety attitudes towards FL, Saudi students.

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1. Introduction

Due to the cognitivist roots of the field, research on emotions in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) has long been disregarded, despite observations that it is past time to address this "emotional deficit" (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). It is reasonable to state that the majority of SLA research has concentrated on the negative aspects of emotion, with anxiety being the most extensively researched topic (Horwitz, 2001; Lu & Liu, 2011; MacIntyre, 1999; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991c; Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999; Scovel, 1978). The current work broadens the SLA research that is addressing the emotional gap.

According to MacIntyre (1999, p. 27), FLCA is described as "the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language." A comparison can be drawn between this and the current surge in interest in foreign language (FL) learners' emotions. For many years, studies only examined one negative emotion — anxiety — but more recently, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) broadened the scope by comparing FLCA to FLE to determine how closely they related to one another and whether they shared any learner-external or learner-internal variables. Numerous indicators of complex dynamic interactions with a huge range of attitudinal, psychological, sociobiographical, motivational, as well as linguistic variables shaped by the classroom context, the school, and even the larger societal context were found in both the initial study as well as follow-up research on these 2 emotions (Dewaele, Chen et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). The complex and erratic nature of the link between delight and anxiety was one important realization. One does not always indicate the other when the other is present, and vice versa. Soon after, researchers discovered that students might have different feelings, like FL boredom (FLB; Li et al., 2020; Pawlak et al., 2020). To determine how these 3 learner emotions jointly predict FL achievement and to what extent the 3 learner emotions are linked to the same or different learner-internal along with learner-external variables, the most recent research in the field has begun to include FLB, FLCA, and FLE, in a single research design (Li & Han, 2022; Li & Wei, 2022).

The basic idea of this study is that a deeper comprehension of the nuanced emotions experienced by FL learners can result in better pedagogical approaches, which will enhance the performance and advancement of FL learners in Saudi Arabia. Using a mixed-methods design, which enables researchers to examine several latent variables in a single model and hearing to participants' voice, the current study pursues this line of inquiry.

Literature Review

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

In SLA, research on anxiety related to language acquisition peaked in the late 1970s. However, because language anxiety was not yet a well-defined notion, the early research, which MacIntyre (2017) referred to as the "Confounded Approach," yielded contradictory results. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) referred to FLCA as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). This marked the beginning of the second phase of the field, known as the "Specialized Approach" (MacIntyre, 2017). Students who experience FLCA "have the trait of feeling state anxiety when participating in language learning and/or use," according to Horwitz's additional explanation (2017, p. 33).

FLCA has been connected to certain learner characteristics. Dewaele (2013b) has found that lower levels of FLA are associated with younger onset ages of acquisition, authentic FL usage during the learning period, frequent FL use currently, high levels of FL socialization, and a big FL network of users. Dewaele (2013b) discovered little gender-related variations in FLCA. On the other hand, those who were older and/or more educated performed far worse on FLA in their different languages. Lower FLA in native and FLs is generally correlated with the number of languages previously taught (Petrides, Dewaele, & Furnham, 2008; Thompson & Lee, 2013). Additionally, it has been discovered that pentalinguals' FLCA levels dramatically rise from their L1 to L5 (Dewaele, 2013b). The typological distance between the target language as well as other languages in the learner's repertoire affects FLCA in addition to the learner's total number of languages. Anxiety is typically much reduced if the target language is a member of a well-known linguistic family (Dewaele, 2010).

FLCA can have very sneaky consequences. According to Arnold and Brown (1999), they can undermine the finest teaching methods, impair the learning potential of foreign language learners, and make even the most visually appealing content insufficient. Presumably, FLCA is one of the best indicators of whether FL learning will be successful or unsuccessful (MacIntyre, 1999). According to Arnold and Brown (1999), p. 2, FLCA has the potential to interfere with the prefrontal lobe's normal functioning, which can impact memory and thus lower learning capacity. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994a, 1994b), anxiety can interfere with language acquisition as well as production during the output, input, and processing phases of the learning process. FLA has a negative impact on learning and communication, as studies have repeatedly demonstrated. These impacts are multifaceted and complex (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Horwitz, 2010). MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) employed a dynamic approach to

examine the relationship between anxiety feelings and real-time vocabulary retrieval difficulties during communication, focusing on the micro-perspective. Their findings revealed fluctuations in perceived competence and willingness to speak. Gregersen, MacIntyre, and Meza (2014) use a similar methodology to show how subjective anxiety scores correlate with real-time heart rate changes, illuminating the physiological reactions that contribute to anxiety. Horwitz (2010) questioned whether the facilitating effects of FLCA even existed, despite some suggestions that a facilitating form of FLCA may be possible (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012). These impacts have been erratic and difficult to locate in the scientific literature.

A plethora of factors have been identified as potential causes of FLCA, like harsh error correction (Gregersen, 2003; Young, 1991), anxieties about one's self-presentation (Cohen & Norst, 1989), student competition (Bailey, 1983), teacher-student incompatibility (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014), perfectionism (Dewaele, Finney, Kubota & Almutlaq, 2017; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002), neuroticism (Dewaele, 2002, 2013a), tolerance of ambiguity in the second language (Dewaele & Shan Ip, 2013), and a host of other factors (Horwitz, 2010). Error correction is both an essential component of learning as well as a major cause of anxiety, which makes language acquisition an especially anxiety-arousing process (Gregersen, 2003). That anxiety arousal tends to enhance the likelihood of making mistakes is consequently ironic (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994a). Teachers and students alike will recognize the vicious cycle of anxiety arousal. With repeated experiences, the anticipation of feeling uncomfortable solidifies in the minds of the learners; this expectation—which lies at the heart of the anxiety component of FLA—is of experiencing similar anxious episodes in the future (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989).

Foreign Language Enjoyment

According to Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), the idea of FLE is on the basis of positive psychology ideas, particularly those of Csíkszentmihályi (1990). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) defined FLE as “a complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of the challenge and perceived ability that reflects the human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks (...) enjoyment occurs when people not only meet their needs but exceed them to accomplish something new or even unexpected” (p. 216 - 217). In other words, happiness is less fleeting and extends beyond simple pleasure. According to this definition, FLE falls into one of three valence categories: midway (low to moderate enjoyment) to the upper, positive end, where FLE turns into a flow-like experience. It is important to note that the authors didn't include any new material regarding the distinct dimension of activation/arousal. They believed that both high-arousal contexts, like classroom discussions or public speaking, and medium-arousal activities, like silent writing or reading, may give rise to FLE.

The psychology literature distinguishes between negative as well as positive emotions, which begs the intriguing topic of how positive as well as negative emotions relate to FL learning in particular. "Positive emotion has a different function from negative emotion; they are not opposite ends of the same spectrum," stated MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) in support of the latter view (p. 193). They contend that students' imaginations can expand their optimistic outlook, which is in line with Fredrickson's (2001) assertion that positive emotions are more than just the absence of negative ones. optimistic emotions actively promote health and well-being.

The present research aim is not only to assess the two emotion variables, FLE and FLCA, separately but also to investigate the interactions between these variables because it is hypothesized that emotions will interact in an academic setting. As a result, research looking at how different emotion variables in the FL class relate to one another and interact is becoming more and more common. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) conducted a comparative analysis between FLE and FLCA in their paper that introduced FLE to the applied linguistics lexicon. The two emotion variables showed a statistically significant negative association. The first study (published in Chinese) to combine FLCA, FLB, and FLE into a single research design was Li and Han's (2022) study. Significant negative correlations between FLE as well as FLCA, FLB and FLE, and a significant positive connection between FLCA and FLB were discovered by the authors among Chinese EFL students. With a considerable positive association between FLCA and FLB and a significant negative correlation between FLE as well as FLB, Li and Wei (2022) found mostly comparable patterns. Nevertheless, no association was discovered between FLCA and FLE.

FL Emotions and Attitude/Motivation

Students' attitudes and motivation to study physical education (Simonton & Garn, 2019), science (Sinatra et al., 2014), medicine, mathematics (Goldin, 2014) and nursing studies (Artino et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2021), have all been found to be impacted by classroom emotions. It follows that the discovery that emotions have an impact on motivational and attitude factors in FL classrooms is not shocking. Previous studies have discovered favorable correlations between FLE and motivation to learn (Zhang et al., 2020) as well as an attitude toward the FL (Dewaele, O'zdemir, et al., 2022; De Smet et al., 2018; Jiang and Dewaele, 2019). Conversely, FLCA is adversely correlated with both overall motivation to study the target language (Liu & Huang, 2011; Liu & Cheng, 2014; Neisi & Yamini, 2009) and attitude toward the FL (Dewaele & Proietti Ergün, 2020).

The research that has already been written about emotions is frequently included in larger studies of motivation. For instance, Gardner (1985, 2010) offered a set of affective characteristics, such as positive attitudes toward target language speakers

and emotions like interest in FLs and desire to acquire the FL, that describe the motivated learner. A related strategy, the socio-contextual model developed by Clément (1980, 1986) suggested two major motivational processes, the second of which, self-confidence, is a reflection of low anxiety as well as positive competence appraisals. These two theories both emphasize positive effects while highlighting motivation. However, every model suggests that pleasant emotions play a significant impact. Positive emotion can support human resilience in the face of adversity by reducing the aftereffects of negative emotional arousal. Happy feelings also encourage play and investigation, which opens up new experiences and efficient learning opportunities. Positive emotions assist a person in developing resources that collectively might be referred to as social capital because people are drawn to those who are positive emotionally and because positivity fosters social relationships and goodwill (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The existence of other people offers a wealth of resources that aid learning, given that learners rely on language speakers (teachers, parents, advanced learners, native speakers, and close peers) (Gardner, 1985; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001).

When designing the current study, the researcher considered whether concentrating on the detrimental impacts of anxiety would only address half of the problem. Reducing the negativity of the experience, addressing the unpleasant feelings, and lessening its disruptive effects are generally the main recommendations for managing language anxiety, given the consistency of the negative correlations between anxiety and a variety of language-related factors (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Young, 1991). Positive FL emotion has not received as much consideration in the literature as negative emotion (Bown & White, 2010; Imai, 2010). "Much more attention is given to the question of negative emotions... (one) should not lose sight of the importance of developing the positive," as Arnold and Brown (1999, p. 2) have already noted.

Enjoyment and Anxiety in Saudi Foreign Language Classroom

Students in Saudi Arabia studying EFL face numerous emotional challenges that impede fulfilling their academic tasks and have an adverse effect on their academic results. When students are given academic assignments, these issues are the primary cause of their concern. They might therefore not appreciate the learning environment. These kids may have a variety of anxiety-related problems, including fear of failing, classroom anxiety, and academic anxiety, which keeps them from performing their academic obligations well. Poor academic performance is the result of this. The discrepancies between academic performance and skills make the anxiety of EFL learners evident (Dewaele et al., 2019). FLCA may limit pupils' potential and cause them to become disinterested in learning foreign languages in the classroom. Feeling

upbeat and enthusiastic makes students happy, which is one of the most significant components of student happiness. Thus, in addition to improving classroom fun, it may also boost flexibility and overcome learning challenges. Few research, particularly in the setting of EFL, have examined the connection between anxiety and enjoyment when learning a FL (Dewey, Belnap & Steffen, 2018).

Alenezi (2020) explores how students at Northern Borders University in Saudi Arabia feel about their degree of academic anxiety and how much they enjoy learning EFL. A survey questionnaire with 5 Likert measures was used to gather data from 163 respondents (93 men and 70 women). The outcomes of the statistical analysis demonstrated that the gender variable had no statistically significant effects on the degree of academic anxiety or the enjoyment of studying EFL. Due to college variables, there were notable variations in the academic anxiety levels among the humanities colleges. However, because of the college variable, there was a notable variation in the degree of satisfaction with the FL among scientific colleges. Furthermore, the study's findings showed a negative correlation between academic anxiety and how much fun learning English as a FL is. Ultimately, the findings indicated that there were additional factors, such as a lack of interest or background and the approach taken to learn the language, that could account for academic anxiety and the degree of satisfaction when learning English as a second language.

At Albaha University in Saudi Arabia, Gawi (2020) examines the effect of anxiety in FL classes on the academic performance of male Saudi students. The participants were fifty students who enrolled in level 2 applied linguistics courses at the College of Science and Arts in Almandaq during the second term of 2018. To gather data, the study administered a questionnaire to study participants to gauge their level of anxiety. It had 15 components, and the variables were broken down into 3 groups: fear of a poor evaluation, communicative anxiety, and test anxiety. The study's results demonstrated that individuals experienced a low degree of dread of receiving a poor rating, a moderate level of test anxiety, and a slightly higher level of communication anxiety. These results imply that the pupils experience mild anxiety in foreign language classes.

The current study at King Khalid University intends to explore the relationships between Saudi undergraduate and graduate students' anxiety and their enjoyment of learning EFL. Furthermore, it investigates how levels of FLCA and FLE emotions are impacted by several factors, such as age, gender, and attitudes about the FL.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between FLCA and FLE of Saudi EFL learners?
2. Do the Saudi EFL learners' age, gender, and attitudes towards FL affect the FLCA and FLE?
3. What are the respondents' views about their anxiety in the EFL class?

Method

Participants

The questionnaire was fully completed by 235 Saudi FL students studying English at King Khalid University's College of Languages and Translation. There were 96 male and 139 female participants in the sample. Given that gender imbalances in FL learning have frequently been noted in earlier studies (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), the gender imbalance in the data was not shocking.

Instruments

The demographics section, from which the aforementioned data was taken, was the first part. After that, participants were required to reply to 29 questions that described the FL course. Of these, 21 items were written to reflect FLE (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) and 8 were taken from the FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986).

In this exploratory investigation, variables were measured using the following instruments:

Short-form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

MacIntyre (1992) created an eight-item test to assess FL anxiety in the FL classroom (see Appendix A). The items on the test include "Even if I am well prepared for English language classes, I feel anxious about it". All of the components load onto a single FLCA latent variable, making the measure unidimensional. A 5-point Likert scale varying from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was utilized to rate each item. None of the FLCA scale items was reverse-coded including the two items that were reverse-coded on the adopted scale (Horwitz et al., 1986). As a result, for every item on this test, high scores correspond to high anxiety.

These two phrases have been reformulated as follows:

- I worry that I won't do well in my English lesson.
- When I speak in English language classes, I don't feel confident.

The final question of the scale was open-ended as follows: "***Describe one specific event or episode in your FL class that you feel anxious, embarrassed, or even scared, and describe your feeling in as much detail as possible.***"

Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale

A twenty-one-item scale designed by Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) was used to measure the FLE (see Appendix B). One higher-order FLE factor and three lower-order factors—Personal Enjoyment (e.g., "I enjoy my FL class"), Social Enjoyment (e.g.,

“There is a good atmosphere in my FL classroom”), and Teacher Appreciation (e.g., “My FL teacher is encouraging”)—make up the scale's underlying factor structure. Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

FL Attitude

One question on participants' attitudes toward the target FL was used to measure their attitudes: “What is your attitude towards your FL?”. A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “very unfavorable” to “very favorable”, was utilized to measure the responses.

Nine participants took part in a pilot test of the initial version of the questionnaire. As a result, some things were eliminated, and others were reformulated. Using Google Forms, the completed questionnaire was uploaded to the internet.

Data collection

Snowball sampling, a nonprobability sampling technique, was used to gather the data (Rooney & Evans, 2018). An anonymous online survey with open access was employed. Emails inviting male and female colleagues at King Khalid University's College of Languages and Translation to share the link with their students during the first term of the academic year 2023/2024 were used to solicit participation. The survey was uploaded online using Google Forms. Participants in the study were informed of the goal of the research and asked for their agreement before they were allowed to fill out the questionnaire. They were told that the data would be collected anonymously and kept confidential.

Data analysis

According to Cresswell and Clark (2011), data analysis is the data-validation variation of a convergent parallel architecture. This method is effective with the research sample since it concurrently collects quantitative and qualitative data. The objective of the quantitative data in this methodology is to pinpoint the particular items on which the values of the participants, both male as well as female, varied noticeably. The goal of the qualitative data is to offer participant-written examples for the closed items in the questionnaire. The discussion section presents a combined and mixed set of findings from the two sets of data. This kind of analytical method “...the qualitative items are an add-on to a quantitative instrument, the items generally do not result in a complete context-based qualitative data set. However, they provide the researcher with emergent themes and interesting quotes that can be used to validate and elaborate the quantitative survey findings.” (p.81)

There will be two phases to the analysis. The items that had significantly different values for the male, as well as female participants, will be determined in the first phase

using statistical analysis. The statistical analysis was carried out entirely with SPSS (version 25). Data extracts from the open question will be chosen for the second phase based on the criteria that they are engaging, succinct, and reflective of a specific closed item. Qualitative data were analyzed manually. By giving participants a voice, the abstract and statistical dimensions can now have an emic component.

Results

1. Quantitative results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients

With SPSS 25.0, descriptive statistics along with correlations between every variable were computed. Table 1 contains descriptive data for every variable in the study. Furthermore, Table 2 shows a Pearson correlation coefficient matrix for each variable.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Skewness
Age	28.20	0.808	18	40	-0.25
Attitude towards FL	3.38	1.26	1	5	-0.31
FLE	3.65	0.566	1	5	-1.42
FLCA	2.76	0.804	1	4.05	-0.13

Table 2. Correlation Coefficient Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	-	-	-0.052**	-0.062**	0.107*
2. Gender		-	-0.105*	0.056*	0.081**
3. Attitude towards FL			-	0.352**	-0.285**
4. FLE				-	-0.202*
5. FLCA					-

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed)

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

The purpose of the correlation analysis was to look at the links between the two emotions—FLE and FLCA—that were the subject of the study, as well as how these relationships related to age and attitudes about the FL variables. Two separate t-tests were performed with the two emotions as dependent variables, respectively, to examine the impact of gender on FLCA as well as FLE.

1.1 The correlation between FLCA and FLE

Mean scores on the Likert 5-point scale were determined for FLE ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.566$) & FLCA ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.804$). Figure 1 shows that FLE levels were statistically higher for the Saudi EFL students than the FLCA levels.

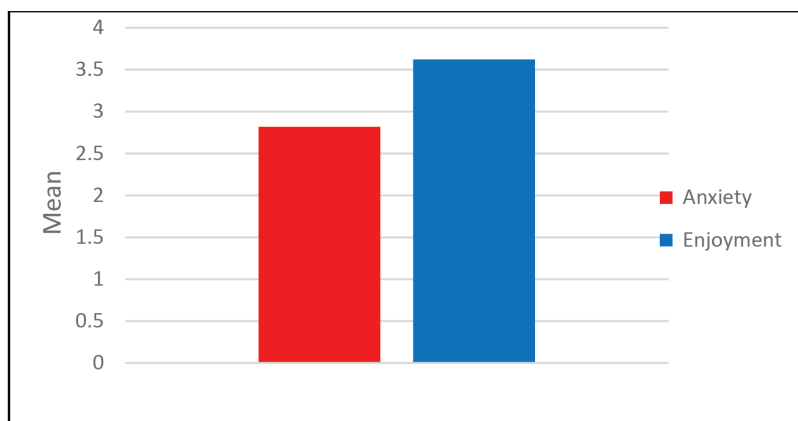


Figure 1. Mean of FLCA and FLE

A perfect negative significant correlation with a small-medium effect size ($Rho = -.202$, $p < 0.023$, $r^2 = .64$) was found using Spearman Rho correlation analysis between FLE and FLCA (Cohen, 1988). Stated differently, individuals exhibiting greater FLE levels also typically had lower FLCA levels. It is possible to characterize the effect size as "small-medium," indicating a considerable correlation between the FLE and FLCA.

1.2 Gender

As gender was coded as a categorical variable, with the two emotions acting as the dependent variables, the researcher performed independent sample t-tests. Statistical analyses showed that female students scored significantly higher on FLE than their male peers ($t = -.268$, $df = 145$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $d = .32$; Male Mean = 3.62, $SD = .411$; Female Mean = 3.73, $SD = .596$). According to Cohen (1988), this is a small-to-medium effect size.

For the anxiety, statistical analyses indicated that female participants also scored significantly higher than male respondents ($t = -1.12$, $df = .33$, $p < .05$), Male Mean = 3.01, SD = .939; Female Mean = 3.31, SD = .772) (see Figure 2).

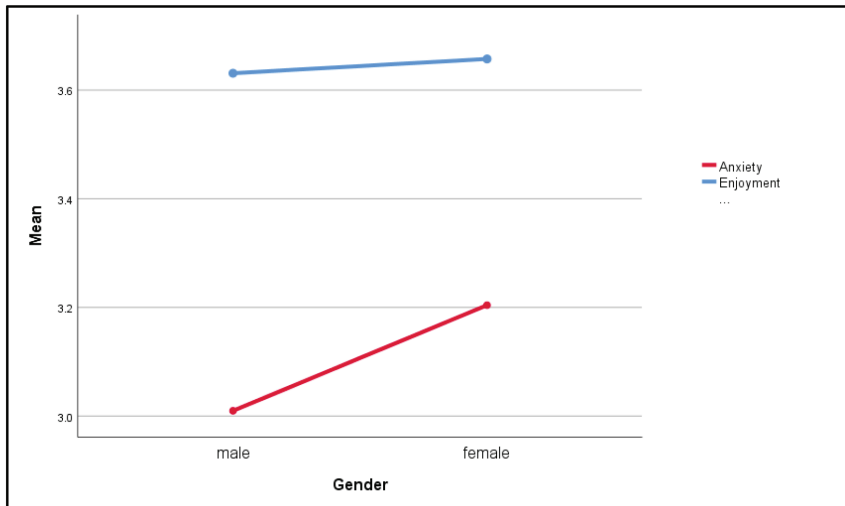


Figure 2. Gender differences in FLCA and FLE

1.3 Age

Five groups have emerged from the sample. They are divided as follows: early twenties (18-21), mid-twenties (22-25), late twenties (26-29), early thirties (30-34), and late thirties (35-40). Statistical analyses indicated that the early twenties respondents scored the highest level of FLE ($M = 3.79$), whereas those in their late thirties scored the lowest level of FLE. The other three age groups: early twenties, mid-twenties, and early thirties have almost scored similar levels of FLE ($M = 3.62$, $M = 3.61$, $M = 3.63$) respectively. For the FLCA, the lowest levels were scored by those in their early twenties ($M = 2.97$), followed by the late thirties group ($M = 2.99$). The mid-twenties respondents scored the highest level of FLCA ($M = 3.23$), then the early thirties group ($M = 3.1$).

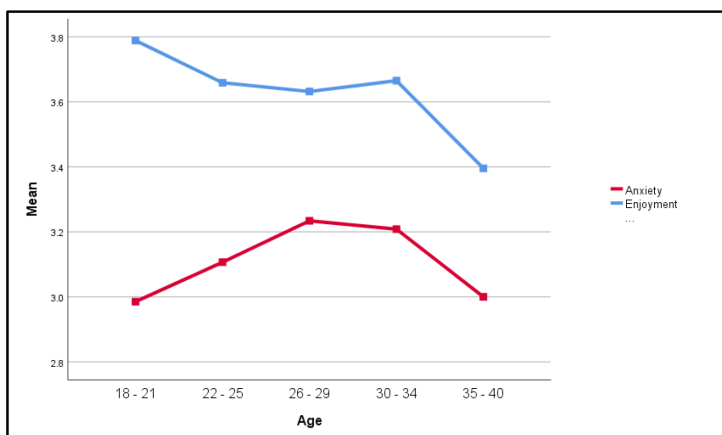


Figure 3. The effect of age group on FLCA as well as FLE

1.3 Attitude towards FL

Figure 4 demonstrates the relationships of FLE, FLCA, and the participants' attitudes towards FL. Attitude towards FL has a powerful effect on both the emotions of FLCA as well as FLE. In general, the participants who have positive attitudes toward FL scored higher levels of FLE than those with neutral or unfavorable attitudes. However, the analyses indicated opposing results for FLCA. In other words, students who have unfavorable attitudes towards FL felt more anxious ($M = 3.81$) and less enjoyed ($M = 3.40$) in their FL classes.

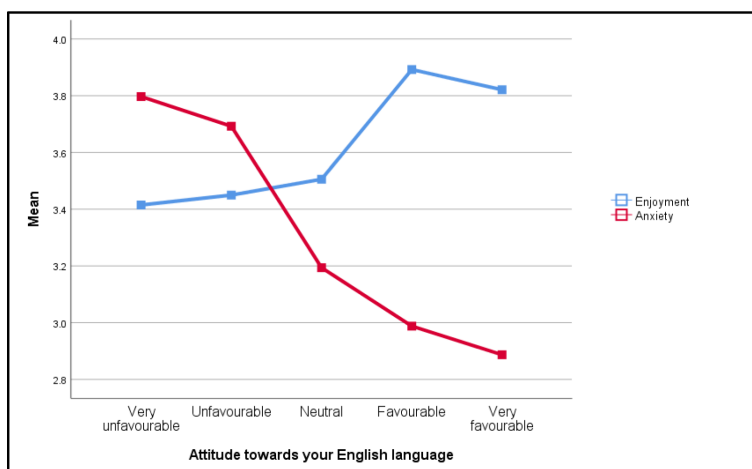


Figure 4. The effect of attitudes towards FL on FLCA and FLE

2. Qualitative results

This study aims to focus more on the negative feelings and the reasons that cause anxiety for Saudi students of English (see Alshahrani, 2024) for enjoyment episodes of EFL Saudi students). The researcher looked over the responses which provided by the respondents to the open-ended question included in the online survey in order to gain a greater comprehension of the statistical results mentioned above and to hear the perspectives of the learners. The students' testimonies which have been obtained in English have been analyzed manually. In general, class activities, teacher unpredictability, and comparison with peers are the focal themes that have been generated. In their own words, the male and female participants' comments below clarify how emotional reactions take place:

Classroom activities

One of the activities that has been identified as the most anxiety-inducing occurrences in classrooms is speaking, which involves students raising and addressing their peers. As this female participant demonstrated during her presentation:

The need to stand in front of everyone for a presentation. I feel like their eyes are looking through my soul. And sometimes of how anxious I am, I start to hear them laugh in my mind; and I know it's only in my mind but at that time I only think about finishing what I'm doing and leaving. (Female, 20)

Another female participant experienced a similar anxious situation related to giving a presentation:

One day I was giving a presentation, and I was lacking a little bit of language proficiency. Although I practiced well, I became nervous and felt afraid. I forgot everything I trained for. I lost sentences and words and did not present well. I was so sad, and this situation left something inside me that I couldn't get over. (Female, 26)

Wrong answers have also resulted in embarrassment:

I felt embarrassed in my first year of university when I gave a wrong answer. I did not like that situation. (Male, 23)

One male participant mentioned that reading aloud caused him anxiety and nervousness:

I feel afraid and anxious when I am asked to read out loud. I do not like it at all. Knowing that I am good at reading when I am asked to read out loud in front of the class, I get very nervous and wish I had not attended. (Male, 19)

Teacher unpredictability

Teacher behaviors and personality were found as sources of FLCA. One participant reported that the teacher's strictness left her frustrated:

When I am excited about the lesson the teacher comes with a negative or inappropriate approach to the students and treats me badly, such as not smiling or respecting the circumstances of some of the students, not accepting writing excuses, and never caring for the student's feelings. (Female, 24)

Teacher randomness was also a source of students' negative feelings:

When the doctor chose randomly, who didn't answer, she didn't treat her with respect. I answered her questions, but I remained scared. (Female, 22)

competitiveness among peers

Several respondents, in particular beginners, mentioned that their classmates' proficiency caused them to result in their lack of confidence to speak English. A female participant was upset when compared her language to her peers':

I was in my class watching other girls speaking about themselves in English. I was in my first year in college. As a result, I didn't have much experience with speaking skills. I felt upset because I compared their experience with mine. In the end, I spoke well, and my instructor was so glad with our level. (Female, 21)

Speaking activities have also been found to be a source of tension among male respondents:

The tension always happens of speaking and comparing the level of my language to the rest of the proficient students. Also, the fear of bad comments when there is a mistake in pronunciation. (Male, 23)

A beginner male reported that influence in his English caused negative feelings:

I hate that feeling when I am unable to understand everything my teacher says in English. I cannot communicate in English well, and I cannot express and say that I do not understand. I try to improve, and I love studying, but because of my inability to master the English language, I feel that I am not an excellent student. (Male, 18)

Discussion

The current paper had two goals in mind. The study aims to investigate the connection between positive and negative emotions and how these two types of feelings relate to various learner-independent variables such as gender, age, and FL attitudes. Overall, the results indicate that emotions, both positive and negative, are not the two extremes of a single dimension and that it is not always the case that rising positive feelings are correlated with falling bad emotions. Instead, pupils could concurrently feel high (or low) levels of both negative as well as positive emotions. In contrast to the oversimplified one-dimensional taxonomy of valence, this supports the control-value theory (Pekrun, 2006), which conceptualizes emotions along three dimensions taxonomy: valence (positive v/s negative), object focus (action v/s outcome), and activation (activating v/s deactivating).

RQ1. Is there a relationship between FLCA and FLE of Saudi EFL learners?

The first question looked into the connection between FLCA and FLE. In general, subjects reported far greater FLE than FLCA levels. These findings suggest that while EFL Saudi students varied in their FLCA levels, they generally enjoyed FL lessons. While FLE and FLCA showed a strong negative association, their effect sizes were minor (FLE $M = 3.65$, FLCA $M = 2.76$) and their score distributions were dissimilar (Cohen, 1988). Thus, it can be argued that although these two dimensions are connected, happiness and worry seem to be distinct feelings rather than the extremes of the same dimension (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). This finding suggests that both the lack of enjoyment and the existence of FLE are not necessarily correlated with high levels of FLCA and FLCA, respectively. Regarding emotional dynamics, it is simple to picture a person who is enjoying a language lesson or conversation with a native speaker but occasionally feels anxious (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011), or a disinterested learner who has low delight as well as low anxiety. The passage from a male reply explains how emotions that are positive and negative can coexist.

It is feasible to observe students who are having fun in their English classes but who are also going through anxious moments (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). The results of subsequent investigations on various FL populations (Li & Han, 2022; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019) support and expand upon the findings of MacIntyre and Dewaele (2014) regarding the moderately unfavorable connection between FLCA along FLE. There are two possible interpretations for this: either high FLE aids in counteracting the detrimental effects of FLCA on learners, or high FLCA erodes the FLE, maybe due to the exhausting and distracting effects of anxiety. Given that teachers in Saudi Arabia typically speak Arabic in the classroom, one may claim that the country's educational

system contributes to pupils' high anxiety levels by limiting their exposure to the English language (Alrabai, 2016). Lack of training for EFL teachers may have contributed to the anxiety-inducing atmosphere in the classroom (see, for example, Al-Hazmi, 2003). Teachers must establish career goals, communicate clearly about their expectations, offer constructive criticism, seek out professional development opportunities, and maintain open lines of communication and teamwork in order to improve learners' FLE (Al-Dosari et al., 2022).

RQ2. Do the Saudi EFL learners' age, gender, and attitudes towards FL affect the FLCA and FLE?

The impact of gender, age group, and attitudes about FL on FLE as well as FLCA were among the characteristics associated with FL learners that were the subject of the second set of research questions. The statistical results show that there are gender disparities in the two emotional aspects of delight and anxiety. The composite measures of FLCA, as well as FLE, showed considerably higher scores for female subjects. In terms of FLE items, the female participants reported feeling substantially more enjoyable, pleased with their accomplishment, and like they were learning new things than the male participants. Additionally, the females seemed to find the FL class more enjoyable, liked the ambiance better, and strongly felt that knowing an FL is great. Finally, women in the FL class also tended to feel less furious and more creative than males did.

The results of the FLCA questions showed that, compared to their male contemporaries, female participants were much less confident and far more concerned about making mistakes. They believed that others spoke the FL more fluently than they did, and they tended to feel more anxious and perplexed. They also had greater physical signs of worry, including a racing heart, throughout the FL class. When it came to the more paralyzing and severe features of anxiety, such as panic attacks, shame, or heightened anxiety even in the face of preparation, they were similar to the male participants. These results corroborate those of Dewaele et al. (2016) and Williams et al. (2002), which found that although girls scored higher on desire and liked the FL, their attitudes toward peers, parents, and teachers did not differ significantly from those of boys. The narrative resources provide context for the statistical results. In their own words, students explained how their work was negatively impacted by the teacher's demeanor and abilities, how frustrating it may be to not be able to use the FL, and how participating in FL activities can make students feel awkward and anxious.

Regarding gender differences, it's important to steer clear of simplistic, stereotyped ideas. Research by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013) has demonstrated the complex yet flexible relationships that exist between language and gender as they relate to social practices. It is important to find out just how different men and women, and even boys and

girls, really are from one another before making assumptions about potential causes for differences between them—or the lack of them—especially when it comes to language acquisition. It could be a self-fulfilling prophecy for some boys to be discouraged from participating in the language learning process just because they believe the assumption that ladies are better at learning languages. Beliefs about gender differences and appropriate responses to them may have more impact on communication than actual gender differences. Gender differences therefore warrant careful research. These studies are especially pertinent to the emotional aspects of FL learning, as minor yet noteworthy variations have been noted (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

RQ3. What are the respondents' views about their anxiety in the EFL class?

The results of the analyses demonstrated the significance of the association between the learner's attitude toward the FL, FLCA, and FLE. Pupils who had a good time and weren't bored in the FL class had substantially better attitudes about the FL. FLCA had a strong influence, which contradicts earlier studies on FLE as well as FLCA (Dewaele, Özdemir et al., 2022; De Smet et al., 2018, Li & Dewaele, 2021). However, it supports the findings of Dewaele et al. (2018) and Jiang and Dewaele (2019) that FLCA was adversely correlated with attitude toward the FL. As highlighted by Botes et al. (2020a), we cannot rule out the possibility that there is a reciprocal causal relationship between emotions and attitudes: learners who have a more positive attitude toward the FL are more likely to experience excitement as well as happiness in the FL classroom, which may reinforce their positive attitude toward the culture as well as language.

Whether specific educational implications may be inferred from this exploratory effort is not obvious. One possible implication is that teachers who prioritize making learning enjoyable for students in high-stakes settings, like public performances, may have to accept that some anxiety may accompany the ride, particularly for female students. The research available indicates that there is a real emotional mixing in language courses, with students who are more emotionally intense likely to feel both more anxious and more satisfied in the FL classroom.

It is not possible to convert the network of relationships found in this study into concrete steps that educators may take to enhance the FL positive environment. The effectiveness of particular teaching practices can only be tested through intervention studies, which presents a fantastic opportunity for additional research. Nonetheless, the results allow for the formulation of several quite general recommendations. Students' success can benefit directly and indirectly from piquing their interest in the FL and its culture, as well as from influencing their attitude about the FL. Finding ways to reduce FLCA during exams and tests could improve the outcome. To put it briefly, FL learners' emotions will be shaped in a way that will enable them to develop and flourish if a rich, stimulating, and positive emotional classroom environment is created (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2021; Li, 2021).

Conclusion

The results of this study indicated that attitudes toward the FL were inversely correlated with FLCA and positively linked with FLE. This validates findings from earlier research (e.g. Li & Han, 2023). Interest in learning the foreign language is reflected in learner's attitude towards the FL. Positive feelings of satisfaction and the effectiveness of language acquisition are probably going to be positively impacted by motivation and interest. Unsurprisingly, findings of this study showed that students who had a more positive attitude towards the FL reported both significantly more FLE and less FLCA. It's possible that these students are now more driven to learn the FL and to put in the time and effort necessary to achieve their goal.

There are certain limitations to the current investigation. Since there were only 235 participants in the research sample, the responses may not accurately reflect all Saudi FL learners. Moreover, likely, those who offered to take the time to complete the online survey had a predisposition in favor of FL learning in the first place. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Denies (2022), opinions of FL and gender disparities might range from nation to nation and skill to skill. In other words, while limiting the sample to a certain region and educational setting may help researchers control for particular factors, it may not improve the findings' generalizability. Lastly, it should be noted that the associations observed may also be influenced by other independent variables that were not examined in this research.

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APPENDIX A

The FLCA scale (adopted from MacIntyre, 1992)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1= Strongly disagree/ 2= Disagree / 3= Undecided/ 4= Agree / 5= Strongly agree

1. Even if I am well prepared for English language classes, I feel anxious about it
2. I always feel that the other students speak in the English language classes better than I do
3. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English language classes
4. I worry about making mistakes in English language classes
5. When I speak in English language classes, I don't feel confident
6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English language classes
7. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English language classes
8. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English language classes

APPENDIX B

The FLE scale (adopted from Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1= Strongly disagree/ 2= Disagree / 3= Undecided/ 4= Agree / 5= Strongly agree

1. I can be creative
2. I can laugh off embarrassing mistakes in the FL
3. I don't get bored
4. I enjoy it
5. I feel as though I'm a different person during the FL class
6. I learnt to express myself better in the FL
7. I'm a worthy member of the FL class
8. I've learnt interesting things
9. In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments

10. It's a positive environment
 11. It's cool to know a FL
 12. It's fun
 13. Making errors is part of the learning process
 14. The peers are nice
 15. The teacher is encouraging
 16. The teacher is friendly
 17. The teacher is supportive
 18. There is a good atmosphere
 19. We form a tight group
 20. We have common "legends", such as running jokes
 21. We laugh a lot
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