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Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety: Associations With General and Domain-Specific English Achievement¹

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Abstract

Recent research has confirmed the predictive effect of general foreign language (FL) achievement on Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). However, few studies have examined the effect of domain-specific language achievement in shaping FL learning emotions. The present study thus aims to examine how FLE and FLCA are linked to overall FL achievement and self-perceived achievement in six different domains across listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. A total of 1,415 Chinese senior secondary students participated in the questionnaire survey. Regression analyses showed that 1) both FLE and FLCA were predicted more by self-perceived general English proficiency, while less by actual English achievement; 2) perceptions of speaking and grammar competence were significant predictors of both emotions; 3) perceived reading competence predicted FLE significantly but not FLCA; and that 4) perceptions of listening, writing, and vocabulary competence predicted neither FLE nor FLCA. The implication is that domain-specificity should be taken into consideration in future explorations of FL emotions.

Keywords: *foreign language enjoyment, foreign language (classroom) anxiety, positive psychology, control-value theory*

1. Introduction

Emotions have long been shunned in second language learning in favor of cognitive factors (Dewaele & Li, 2020). Nevertheless, the past decade has witnessed a steady increase in attention not just to anxiety but to a broader range of emotions (Prior, 2019). Interest in emotions, the so-called “affective turn”, had already been growing in neighboring areas such

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as education (e.g., Arnold & Brown, 1999). However, the introduction of positive psychology in SLA has led to a boom in emotion research (Dewaele & Li, 2020). As a result, the emotion spectrum has been stretched from the single “dot” of anxiety to a broader network of various emotions, for example, enjoyment (e. g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Li & Xu, 2019), shame and guilt (e.g., Galmiche, 2017; Teimouri, 2018), boredom (e.g., Dewaele & Li, 2021; Li, 2021; Pawlak et al., 2020), love (e. g., Pavelescu & Petrić, 2018) and multiple other positive and negative emotions (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2019; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017).

Among the long list of emotions, the combination of Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Foreign Language (Classroom) Anxiety (FLCA) has caught most scholarly attention. They have been widely recognized as prevalent among language learners across the world, ranging from beginners to highly advanced learners (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). They have been found to be linked with overall FL achievement, as well as performance in different FL sub-domains (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar). However, more work is needed on the theoretical foundations of these relationships. Finally, the issue of causality has been raised in the relationship between emotions and language achievement, with the suggestion that some degree of bi-directionality is very probable. In the present study, we adopt the view that achievement affects learners’ emotions. It is designed to examine the predictive effects of overall and domain-specific FL achievement on FLE and FLCA, within a broad positive psychology perspective. The exploration may provide L2 researchers and practitioners with a more granular understanding of the relationship between emotions and language achievement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Well-Being Theory and the Broaden-and-Build Theory

The well-being theory (Seligman, 2011) and broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2003), foundation theories of positive psychology, offer insights into the pivotal role positive emotions play in human well-being as well as in their performance, achievement, and development. Since the two theories were introduced to SLA (e. g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Oxford, 2016), they have inspired an increasing number of researchers to explore diverse emotions in language learning contexts for their important role in language development as well as in well-being.

According to the well-being theory, Positive Psychology aims to improve well-being by increasing the “PERMA” elements, namely “positive emotion (P), engagement (E), relationships (R), meaning (M), and accomplishment (A)”. In a language education context, Oxford (2016) underlined the crucial value of well-being: it not only plays a central role in language development but also shapes lifelong mental health. In addition, emotions constitute the core dimension of well-being.

Adopting the broadening-and-building theory, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) argued that positive emotions facilitate language learning by “broadening a person’s perspective, and opening the individual to absorb the language” (p. 193). In contrast, negative emotions have the opposite narrowing effects, restricting the range of potential language input.

In a similar vein, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) argued that enjoyment and playfulness

might facilitate language learning for they provide learners with a safe psychological environment that encourages linguistic and cultural exploration. They further argued that "enjoyment might be the emotional key to unlocking the language learning potential of adults and children alike" (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 261). In addition, enjoyment was associated with the strengthening of learners' social bonds. As the well-being theory suggests, Li (2018) further claimed that emotion deserves more attention from SLA researchers not only for its pivotal role in language resource broadening and building, but also in fostering individual well-being and mental health.

2.2 Control-Value Theory

Some SLA researchers have adopted Pekrun et al.'s (2006) control-value theory from educational psychology (Li, 2020b; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2017; Piniel & Albert, 2018). In contrast with the well-being theory and the broaden-and-build theory, it is focused on *achievement emotions*, which are tied to achievement activities and achievement outcomes. It provides a comprehensive understanding of emotions, positing assumptions across the conceptual, causal (antecedents and outcomes) and correlational structures of emotions in the specific educational contexts (Pekrun et al., 2007).

Its first key assumption, of high relevance to the present study, is the three-dimensional taxonomy of achievement emotions. More specifically, achievement emotions can be conceptualized along three dimensions (1) *the object focus*: the activity itself or the outcome; (2) *value*: positive vs. negative quality; and (3) *activation*: degree of physical arousal. Thus, enjoyment, for instance, is a positive emotion arising from learning activities with a relatively high level of activation, while anxiety is a negative activating emotion instigated in relation to achievement outcomes (Pekrun et al., 2007).

The control-value theory also posits a model of reciprocity whereby antecedents, achievement emotions, and learning achievement are connected by mutual causation relationship over time (Pekrun et al., 2007). Specifically, achievement emotions arise as a result of control-value appraisals of environment, act on other internal cognitive and motivational resources and the external social resources, indirectly acting on students' academic achievement. Students' achievement (e.g., consequences or feedback) in return constitute key environmental elements for control appraisals and act back on achievement emotions (Pekrun & Stephens, 2010). This model highlights the important role of perceptions of learning achievement in the instigation of achievement emotions. As Li (2020a) argued about the EFL context, perceptions of language achievement, although subjective, are accumulative self-assessments based on numerous previous test results and learning activity performance, and thus, to a larger extent, could be regarded as reliable predictors of learners' language competence. Here, as the model suggests, we argue that both actual learning achievement and perceptions of learning achievements are associated with achievement emotions in that they both serve as important elements of the learning environment and lead to appraisals of control over a subject or subdomains of the subject or an achievement-related activity, and thus instigate certain kinds of achievement emotions in response.

Control-value theory also addresses domain specificity. In other words, learners'

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emotional experiences may occur in domain-specific ways, suggesting that different emotional patterns may emerge in different subjects or subdomains of a subject within the educational contexts (Goetz et al., 2008). It is thus crucial to be cautious when generalizing from one subject to another subject (e. g., L1 and L2), or from one domain to another domain (e. g., listening and writing in a FL context).

Built on the control-value theory, there were a few tentative empirical studies. Firstly, Piniel and Albert (2018) qualitatively analyzed the writings of 166 Hungarian English majors to examine their emotional experiences across four different language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) within the framework of the control-value theory, and more specifically, its three-dimensional taxonomy. Their work showed that the control-value theory is applicable in the conceptualization of emotions occurring in different domains of language learning. Secondly, Li (2018), Li et al. (2020) and Li (2020a, b) probed the reciprocal relationships between Chinese EFL learners' English achievement and their foreign language classroom emotions (anxiety and enjoyment). The results showed that overall English achievement, FLE, and FLCA were mutually related to each other.

In sum, the well-being theory and the broaden-and-build theory address the significant predictive effects of emotions in general, while control-value theory addresses the complex relationships between emotions in educational contexts, addressing their sources, antecedents, correlates, consequences, and their regulation. Thus, Dewaele and Li (2020) argued that it had the potential to offer more for SLA researchers and educators and thus should be introduced to the current affective turn catalyzed by the Positive Psychology movement. In the present study, the control-value theory is the theoretical foundation for the regression models we proposed whereby predictors for FLE and FLCA are actual English achievement and perceived English achievement in general and in each subdomain (i. e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar).

2.3 Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety and Their Links With Foreign Language Competence

FLE and FLCA have been the most visible dependent variables in the emotional wave during the past decade (Teimouri, 2018). It started with the holistic study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) in the broad FL context. Inspired by the broaden-and-build theory, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) argued that there was a clear differentiation between positive and negative emotions and that they had distinctive functions (not simply being mirror images). Enjoyment was chosen as one positive emotion to complement the well-studied negative emotion of anxiety mostly because it is a defining component of flow (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), which is a basic concept of positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) confirmed that FLE and FLCA coexisted in a sample of 1,746 multilinguals of 90 different nationalities, the majority of which ($n = 1171$, 86.2%) were Europeans. The two emotions were moderately negatively related to each other, but were not opposite poles on the same dimension. In addition, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) developed a 21-item Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, which enables the measurement of enjoyment in FL(s).

Starting from this study, a number of SLA researchers delved into the two emotions in

parallel: 1) concepts, constructs, and measurement (e.g., Li et al., 2018), 2) sources (e.g., Li et al., 2018), 3) predictors and correlates (e. g., Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018; Jiang, 2020), 4) effects, consequences and outcomes (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Li et al., 2020), 5) intervention (Li & Xu, 2019), and 6) development (Boudreau et al., 2018; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2021). A comprehensive review of the literature can be found in Dewaele, Chen et al. (2019), Dewaele (in press) and Dewaele and Li (2020). Related to the present study, a wide range of learner-internal and learner-external variables were found as significant predictors of the two emotions. Those variables are age, gender, educational level, personality traits, multilingualism, FL proficiency, relative standing among the peers in the FL class, language experiences, teacher characteristics (enthusiasm, predictability, friendliness, language use) and support, peer group work, and classroom environment (e.g., Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Dewaele, Magdalena et al., 2019; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Khajavy et al., 2018; Saito et al., 2018).

Highly germane to the research questions in the present study, FL learners' actual as well as perceived FL competence were found to be closely related to their levels of FLE and FLCA with different patterns in different contexts and domains. For example, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) found that perceptions of FL proficiency were positively related to FLE, while negatively to FLCA based on the international sample. In other words, FL learners who felt more competent in their FL learning tended to feel more enjoyment while experiencing less anxiety in their FL learning. Using the data from 1622 participants from the same database, Botes et al. (2020), found that more multilingual and more self-perceived proficient FL learners reported significantly higher levels of FLE and lower levels of FLCA, though the effect size was small. Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) examined the links between the two emotions and test results among two groups of participants. First, among 189 FL students in two London secondary schools, their level of FLE was found to be positively related to their self-reported test results while FLCA was negatively related to the test results. The effect size for FLE (12%) was slightly larger than that for FLCA (9%). A similar pattern emerged in the group of 152 EFL learners in Saudi Arabia with FLE being positively related to their actual proficiency (tested through LexTALE), but no significant relationship was found between FLCA and proficiency. Dewaele, Özdemir et al. (2019) focused on a group of 592 Kazakh learners of Turkish as a foreign language and found that actual exam results were significantly related to both emotions, and that the negative relation between FLCA and actual exam results was stronger than the positive relation with FLE.

Among a group of 564 university students in China, Jiang and Dewaele (2019) found a positive relationship between English proficiency level (tested through a standard English test including listening, reading, comprehension, writing and vocabulary tests) and FLE, while a negative one between English proficiency level and FLCA. The effect size was larger for FLE ($r = .50$) than for FLCA ($r = .40$). They also conducted further regression analyses and found that English proficiency level predicted both FLE and FLCA in different ways. More specifically, FLE was predicted by English proficiency level as well as other learner-internal (e. g., attitudes towards the teacher) and learner-external variables (e. g., teacher's joking and friendliness), while FLCA was predicted merely by learner-internal variables (English proficiency level and others like attitudes towards English, and attitudes towards the teacher).

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The effect size of English proficiency level for FLE (47.9%) was larger than that for FLCA (35.6%). In a different Chinese EFL context, Li et al. (2020) used a mixed-method design to probe the links between FLE, FLCA and (actual and perceived) English competence of 1,307 Chinese secondary students. FLCA and FLE were found as significant predictors for self-perceived and actual English competence. In addition, analysis of qualitative data showed that English tests were one of the main causes for different emotions including anxiety and enjoyment. The quantitative and qualitative results converged to suggest the bidirectionality in terms of the relationships between FL emotions and achievement (cf. Botes et al., 2020).

Few of the above-mentioned studies on examining the links between FL achievement and emotions have used control value theory as their theoretical basis. The only exception is the study by Piechurska-Kuciel (2017) on Polish university learners of English L2 and German L3. The researcher found that elevated levels of enjoyment could be attributed to a good command of language because higher language proficiency is associated with higher control perception, or even motivates language learners to attribute more positive value to the language. These findings provided empirical support to the control-value theory in terms of the links between FL achievement, control-value appraisals, and enjoyment. Echoing this, Li (2018) and Li (2020a, b) further addressed the reciprocity and called for a more sophisticated examination, using the control-value theory (Dewaele & Li, 2020). In addition, few studies have explored the joint effects of actual and perceived FL achievement (in general and across each language learning domain) in predicting emotions. Thus, the present study takes a control-value theory approach to investigate the effects of actual and self-perceived EFL competence (overall and domain-specific perceptions) on FLE and FLCA among a group of Chinese EFL learners at secondary educational level.

3. Research Questions

The following three research questions guided the present study:

- 1) What are the levels of Chinese senior high school students' actual and self-perceived EFL competence (general competence perception and perceptions across listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary skills), FLE, and FLCA?
- 2) What are the relationships between actual and self-perceived English competence, FLE, and FLCA?
- 3) To what extent do participants' actual and self-perceived EFL competence (general and domain-specific perceptions) predict their FLE and FLCA?

4. Methodology

4.1 Sampling and Participants

We adopted a convenience sampling strategy in the study. The second author contacted four senior middle school principals in her hometown city, China. She obtained approval from three of them for the questionnaire survey among their students. A total of 1,415 Year-2 students participated in the survey. Specifically, 170 (12.0%) of them were from School A (public and No.1 in the city), 350 (24.7%) from School B (public and No.2 in the city), and 895 (63.3%) from School C (private and a middle-level one in the city). There were 720

(50.9%) male participants, and 692 (48.9%) female participants, with three (0.2%) not disclosing their gender information. There were 861 (61%) humanities students and 554 (39%) science students respectively. Their mean age was 16.83 ($SD = .77$), with a range from 14 to 20. They all spoke and learned Chinese (local dialect and Putonghua) as their L1, and English as their L2. We did not include Year-3 students, because they were preparing for the National College Entrance Exam when the survey was being conducted. We did not include Year-1 students because of their relatively limited English competence. In other words, they were not eligible to take the English language test (see Instruments for more details) used in the study. All the participants were well informed of the nature of the study, the confidentiality of the data, and their rights not to participate in or withdraw from the survey without any consequences for them before they agreed to proceed. The survey was administered in May, 2017.

4.2 Instruments

The materials handed to students were English test papers with answer sheet and composite questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of four sections covering the following aspects: (1) demographic information (e. g., gender, age, discipline, and school), (2) self-perceived English competence, (3) Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, and (4) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. The questionnaire was in Chinese to ensure participants' full understanding of the content.

Actual English Achievement. Matriculation English Test (MET) (2016) of China: Uniform Version¹ was used to measure participants' actual English achievement. MET (2016) contains listening test, reading comprehension, cloze test, blank filling, correction, and writing (aimed to test participants' language ability in listening, reading, comprehension, writing and vocabulary), with a time limit of 120 minutes and a total score of 150 (30, 40, 30, 15, 10 and 25 respectively).

Self-perceived English Competence. Self-perceived English competence was measured through a seven-item scale. Participants were asked to rate their (1) general English competence as well as their competence in the following areas: (2) listening, (3) speaking, (4) reading, (5) writing, (6) grammar, and (7) vocabulary. The items were arranged on a 10-point scale, with 1 being "least proficient" and 10 being "extremely proficient". The seven items showed high reliability in co-measuring participants' self-perceived English competence ($\alpha = .90$).

Foreign Language Enjoyment. The Chinese version of Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (CFLES) (Li et al., 2018) was used to assess participants' emotional experience of enjoyment in their English class. The CFLES consists of three subscales (*FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher*, and *FLE-Atmosphere*) and 11 items responded to on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". It was adapted from the FLES of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) and validated in multiple Chinese EFL contexts at different educational levels. Li et al. (2018) first modified and validated the FLES among a sample of 1,718 Chinese senior middle school students, reporting good validity (e.g., construct validity, discriminant

¹ MET (2016) could be obtained via <https://www.51jiaoxi.com/doc-5524680.html>

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and convergent validity) and reliability ($\alpha = .83$). Wei et al. (2019) also reported good reliability ($\alpha = .81$) among 832 middle school students. The CFLES was used in the study of Hung (2020) among 1,464 Chinese university students and showed high reliability ($\alpha = .90$). In the present study, the reliability of the overall FLE, and its three factors (*FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher*, and *FLE-Atmosphere*) were .82, .78, .89 and .78 respectively.

Foreign Language (Classroom) Anxiety. The Foreign Language (Classroom) Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986) was used to measure participants' anxiety experience in their English class. It contains 33 items, responded to on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". It is generally regarded as a unidimensional construct broadly covering different aspects of FLCA (Horwitz, 2017). The FLCAS is well-established and has been widely used and validated in various contexts across the globe (MacIntyre, 2017). It has been reported consistently to have good reliability. For example, in the FL context of U. S., Horwitz et al. (1986) reported high internal reliability ($\alpha = .93$, $N = 300$). In Chinese EFL context, Shao et al. (2013) reported similarly high reliability ($\alpha = .92$, $N = 510$). In the present study, the reliability of the FLCAS was equally high ($\alpha = .92$).

4.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire survey was conducted near the end of the second semester of the academic year (May-June, 2017). Traditional paper-and-pencil questionnaires were administered to participants in classroom situation to allow for greater participation especially given that the use of mobile phones was not allowed on campus when the survey was being conducted. The participants were verbally informed of the purpose and nature of the survey as well as their rights to participate in or withdraw from the survey at the beginning of the questionnaires. Considering the correlational research design in the present study, participants were asked to provide their names and ID number in the questionnaire but were assured that their names would not appear in publications. In other words, we had to match their data for the predictive variables (measured in the English test and self-ratings) and outcome variables (FLE & FLCA) (measured in the questionnaire) based on their name or ID number.

The English test took place immediately after the questionnaire survey. As it has been a common practice in the three participating schools to use prior MET among students approaching the end of their Year-2, the present English test was agreed upon as a monthly English test in each school. All the examination papers were assessed by English teachers in each school as usual.

A total of 1,718 students were recruited in the project, and 1,415 (82.36%) out of them provided complete and valid responses in each section of the questionnaire as well as in the English test².

4.4 Data Analyses

The data collected were first digitalized. Invalid answers (e.g., straight-line responses) were then identified and deleted. Missing values and outliers were dealt with using SPSS 19.0. Descriptive statistics with normality tests and reliability tests for each scale were conducted,

² The current dataset is the same dataset used in Li et al. (2018).

followed by Pearson correlation analyses and regression (stepwise) analyses. In the regression models, FLE and FLCA were dependent variables respectively, and seven independent variables were entered as co-predictors (i.e., actual English competence, general self-perceived English competence, self-perceived Listening competence, self-perceived Speaking competence, self-perceived Reading competence, self-perceived Writing competence, self-perceived Grammar competence, and self-perceived Vocabulary competence).

5. Results

5.1 Levels of English Competence (Perceptions), FLE, and FLCA

According to Table 1, the mean score of participants in the actual English test was above the benchmark of 90, indicating that generally Year-2 students were ready to take the MET, which is supposed to be taken at the end of Year-3. In terms of English competence perceptions, the mean score of SPEC was slightly lower than the benchmark of 6. At domain level, the mean score of self-perceived competence in Grammar was lowest, followed by that in Vocabulary, Speaking, and Writing, while the mean score of self-perceived competence in Listening was highest, followed by that in Reading, both of which were slightly higher than the benchmark of 6. These indicate that participants were generally not that confident in their English proficiency, especially in the domains of grammar and vocabulary. If we apply the 0.6 benchmark from test scores to scores in emotions, we see that participants experienced low to medium levels of enjoyment and anxiety in the English class (Table 1). Skewness and Kurtosis in the table show that the variables under investigation were all normally distributed, meeting the assumptions of further regression analyses.

Table 1. *Descriptive Results of English Competence (Perceptions), FLE, and FLCA*

	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
AEC	34	146	103.99	18.148	-.602	.065	.331	.130
SPEC	1	10	5.99	1.674	-.646	.065	.607	.130
Listening	1	10	6.55	1.816	-.742	.065	.478	.130
Speaking	1	10	5.32	2.056	-.081	.065	-.374	.130
Reading	1	10	6.11	1.822	-.590	.065	.261	.130
Writing	1	10	5.87	1.754	-.559	.065	.370	.130
Vocabulary	1	10	5.15	1.875	-.146	.065	-.225	.130
Grammar	1	10	4.98	2.089	-.027	.065	-.545	.130
FLCA	35	164	100.39	19.980	-.037	.065	.203	.130
FLE	11	55	34.50	6.890	-.241	.065	.442	.130

Note. N = 2002, AEC = actual English Competence, SPEC = self-perceived English Competence.

5.2 Correlations Between Actual and Self-Perceived English Competence, FLE and FLCA

Pearson correlation results are displayed in Table 2. Firstly, there were significant relationships between actual English competence, self-perceived English competence (in general and in the six specific domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary, and Grammar and FLE and FLCA. More specifically, participants who achieved higher scores

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in the actual English test or felt more confident in their English competence either in general or in a subdomain of English learning, tended to enjoy themselves more and were less anxious in their English learning, and vice versa. According to the benchmark in applied linguistics (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014), the effect size between English competence (perceptions) and FLE was situated between small and medium, while that between English competence (perceptions) and FLCA ranged from medium to large.

Secondly, actual English competence was found to be significantly positively correlated to self-perceived English competence in general and in each domain. That is, participants who had higher achievement in English learning also felt more proficient. Alternatively, participants who felt more proficient in English performed better in actual English tests.

Thirdly, FLE and FLCA were found to be negatively correlated to each other, suggesting that participants who experienced more enjoyment in English learning tended to be less anxious or vice versa.

Table 2. *Correlations Between Actual and Self-Perceived English Competence, FLE, and FLCA*

	AEC	SPEC	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Vocabulary	Grammar	FLCA	FLE
AEC	–									
SPEC	.439***	–								
Listening	.352***	.615***	–							
Speaking	.370***	.640***	.599***	–						
Reading	.382***	.761***	.585***	.572***	–					
Writing	.356***	.704***	.563***	.592***	.670***	–				
Vocabulary	.363***	.765***	.500***	.587***	.681***	.654***	–			
Grammar	.401***	.722***	.450***	.548***	.570***	.619***	.730***	–		
FLCA	-.315***	-.525***	-.395***	-.490***	-.436***	-.398***	-.475***	-.470***	–	
FLE	.184***	.393***	.290***	.319***	.363***	.330***	.368***	.353***	-.439	–

Note. *** $p < .001$

5.3 The Predictive Effects of Actual and Self-Perceived English Competence on FLE and FLCA

Based upon the correlation results, the first stepwise regression analysis was conducted to examine the joint predictive effects of the above-mentioned seven variables on FLE. According to Table 3, a significant regression model with four predictors was found ($F(7, 1409) = 61.298$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .179$, $R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .176$). VIF values lower than 10 suggested that there was no danger of multicollinearity.

Table 3 shows that self-perceived English competence in general and in the domains of Reading, Grammar, Speaking co-predicted FLE, while actual English competence and perceived competence in English Listening, Writing, and Vocabulary were removed as insignificant predictors. This indicates that participants who perceived themselves as competent in English in general, and in English Reading, Grammar, and Speaking were more likely to enjoy the English class.

The second stepwise regression analysis was conducted to examine the joint predictive effects of the above-mentioned seven variables on FLCA. According to Table 4, a significant

Table 3. *Regression Analyses With Seven Variables as Predictors of FLE.*

Regression equations		Fit index			Coefficient			Collinearity statistics		
Predictor	Dependent variable	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	β	B	t	Tolerance	VIF
SPEC						.132	.543	2.771***	.257	3.892
Reading	FLE	.423	.179	.176	61.298***	.115	.435	2.972**	.389	2.572
Grammar						.099	.326	2.579**	.397	2.516
Speaking						.071	.238	2.186*	.553	1.810

Note. Excluded predictors were AEC, Listening, Writing, and Vocabulary perceptions. *B* are Unstandardized Coefficients, β are standardized Coefficients. ★ $p < .05$; ★★ $p < .01$; ★★★ $p < .001$.

regression model with four predictors was found: $F(4, 1410) = 173.426, p < .001, R^2 = .330, R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .328$. VIF values lower than 10 suggested that there was no problem with multicollinearity.

Table 4 shows that self-perceived English competence in general and in the domains of Speaking, and Grammar, and actual English test performance co-predicted FLCA, while Listening, Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary competence perceptions were removed as insignificant predictors. This indicates that participants who perceived themselves as more competent in English in general, and in English Speaking, and Grammar and who did better in actual English tests were more likely to feel less anxious in English class.

Table 4. *Regression Analyses With Seven Variables as Predictors of FLCA*

Regression equations		Fit index			Coefficient			Collinearity statistics		
Predictor	Dependent variable	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	β	B	t	Tolerance	VIF
SPEC						-.250	-2.980	-7.080***	.382	2.617
Speaking	FLCA	.574	.330	.328	173.426***	-.231	-2.247	-7.997***	.568	1.759
Grammar						-.137	-1.313	-4.268***	.460	2.175
AEC						-.065	-.072	-2.648**	.783	1.277

Note. Excluded predictors were Listening, Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary perceptions. *B* are Unstandardized Coefficients, β are standardized Coefficients. ★ $p < .05$; ★★ $p < .01$; ★★★ $p < .001$.

6. Discussion

The first research question examined the levels of Chinese senior high school students' actual and self-perceived EFL competence, FLE, and FLCA. In terms of EFL competence, the average test score was above the benchmark of 90, while the average scores of perceived EFL competence in general as well as in most subdomains (grammar, vocabulary, writing, and speaking) hovered below the benchmark of 6, and only the average scores of perceived EFL competence in listening and reading were slightly higher than the benchmark. The profiles of low control perceptions in grammar and vocabulary might be partially related to the traditional emphasis on grammar and vocabulary in the English curriculum (Cheng, 2011). Not surprisingly, in a heavily examination-oriented context (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019), it is difficult to move away from this traditional strong emphasis towards an overall ability in language use despite the fact that this shift has been strongly advocated in the English

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Curriculum Standards for middle schools by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (Cheng, 2011). Students may feel overwhelmed by the number of grammar rules and English words they are explicitly or implicitly required to absorb by their teachers in order to perform well in tests and exams including the high-stake College Entrance Examination. It is also not surprising that students worry about their speaking skills, which they have little chance to practice, either in class or outside school.

In terms of the classroom emotions, the average score for FLE ($M = 3.14$; $SD = .62$) in the present study was slightly higher than that for FLCA ($M = 3.04$; $SD = .61$). Compared with previous studies, the mean for FLE in the present sample of middle school students was much lower than those in the Chinese university sample of Jiang and Dewaele (2019) ($M = 3.94$; $SD = .54$) and in the international sample in the study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) ($M = 3.82$; $SD = .46$). For FLCA, the mean in the present sample was slightly lower than that in the university sample ($M = 3.14$; $SD = 0.54$) but higher than that in the international sample ($M = 2.75$; $SD = .83$). These differences might be attributable to the differences of instructional contexts, participants' FL proficiency level, teacher characteristics and institutional environment (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019).

The second research question dealt with the relationship between the variables under investigation. Firstly, medium-sized positive correlations were found between participants' actual English test results and their perceived overall and domain-specific English competence. This suggests that both could be used as indicators of learners' language competence. Although self-perceptions are subjective, they are accumulative self-judgement made based upon numerous previous test results and performance and thus to a large extent, could even be more reliable than a one-test result (Li, 2020a). Secondly, both actual English achievement and perceived English achievement (overall and domain-specific) were found to be positively related to FLE and negatively to FLCA, confirming the findings in Botes et al. (2020), Jiang and Dewaele (2019), Piechurska-Kuciel (2017), and Shao et al. (2013). These results also empirically support the control-value theory in the EFL context (Pekrun et al., 2006), more specifically, the links between control appraisal and achievement emotions. In other words, students' perceived control over English in general and subdomains of English is associated with their FLE and FLCA. Thirdly, a negative correlation was found between FLE and FLCA with a medium effect size. This result is consistent with previous findings across different language contexts (e.g., Dewaele, in press; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

The regression analyses revealed that FLE was co-predicted by perceived overall English competence, as well as domain-specific perceptions, namely, perceived competence in reading, grammar, and speaking (42.3%), while actual English test results, perceived listening competence, perceived writing competence, and perceived vocabulary competence failed to predict any unique variance. For FLCA, perceived overall English competence, perceived competence in speaking and grammar, as well as actual English test result were co-predictors (57.4%), while perceived listening, reading, writing, and vocabulary competence did not explain any additional variance. These results are in line with the findings in the international sample of Botes et al. (2020). The shared pattern obtained for both emotions is that self-perceived English competence predicted them jointly with domain-specific competence

perceptions. This empirically extends the control-value theory (Pekrun et al., 2006, 2007) in that it provides a more sophisticated understanding of the links between achievement and emotions, pointing to the domain-specificity within one subject. This also suggests that language teachers should keep a close eye on students' emotional well-being by being aware of their self-perceived competence in English as well as in subdomains of English and try to build and boost their confidence correspondingly.

It is necessary to acknowledge several limitations. First, all the variables under discussion were assessed through self-report measures, which can be distorted by the social desirability bias. In other words, participants may give more positive responses to project a more positive image. Secondly, although our sample is large, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole diverse EFL population in China (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Li et al., 2018). Finally, the present study used a quantitative cross-sectional research design to investigate the predictive effects of actual and perceived EFL competence on FLCA and FLE. According to the key assumptions of control-value theory, achievement and emotions could be linked with each other directly and indirectly bi-directionally over time, suggesting that longitudinal and in-depth qualitative methods are needed in the future to provide a better understanding of the links between emotions and their antecedents and outcomes (Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2021).

Despite the limitations, the present study provides both theoretical and pedagogical implications for L2 education researchers and practitioners. Theoretically, the findings empirically support the control-value theory in L2 contexts and offer more details about the process how achievement is linked to achievement emotions. Here, according to our findings, actual FL competence is closely linked to self-perceptions of FL competence, contributing to learners' control appraisal as environmental elements, and further shaping emotions. Besides, our findings showed that perceptions of FL competence in different subdomains of FL learning had different predictive power, echoing the domain-specificity assumption of the control-value theory and pointing to the necessity to conduct domain-specific explorations. Pedagogically, our findings call for interventions on FLE and FLCA. Many participants did not feel particularly proficient in English in general and across different subdomains. The reasons may be multifaceted. Struggling and anxious participants may struggle with low self-efficacy for English, which could hamper their well-being and limit their linguistic growth (Oxford, 2016). As claimed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), if FL learners are offered an enjoyable environment, they are more likely to unlock their potential in language learning. FL teachers could try to provide more emotional and professional support in general or along each subdomain investigated in the present study, to help their students improve their control perceptions, and their confidence. FL teachers could also try to adjust their classroom practices to boost more interest, which is beneficial in creating an enjoyable context for students. These interventions are undoubtedly meaningful considering that emotions are not only associated with FL learners' learning achievement and development, but also more fundamentally with their mental wellbeing. We reiterate the claim by Mercer et al. (2018) that positive education needs to permeate language education.

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7. Conclusion

The present study examined actual and self-perceived EFL competence and Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety among a group of 1, 415 Chinese English learners in secondary schools. The findings show that participants generally perceived themselves as not being very competent in English and in its various subdomains, highlighting the need for better pedagogical practices to help them progress more quickly, bolster their confidence and their perceptions of mastery or control of English. The findings also show that actual and self-perceived EFL competence and Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety are interconnected, highlighting the correlational structure of achievement and emotions. The regression results show that perceptions of overall English competence have predicted both emotions in combination with domain-specific perceptions. This exemplifies the control-value theory in the EFL context in that control perceptions over achievement is linked to the shaping of achievement emotions. It also extends the theory in that different types of achievement information (actual and self-perceived competence) at different levels (general or more specific) affect control perception, which further determines the intensity of certain emotions in the Chinese EFL context. The main pedagogical implication is that FL achievement and emotional well-being are intertwined and indispensable. Happy learners are more likely to do well both in class and outside of school.

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Chinese Abstracts

中文提要

当心理邂逅语言学习——探究二者的积极联系

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本文对积极心理学 (PP), 或者说促进美好生活的积极因素 (Peterson, 2006) 进行了概述, 并通过 5 个干预研究论述了积极心理对语言学习的积极影响。本文还从积极心理学研究的目标与第二语言学习与教学的语言目标这两个视角看待这 5 个干预研究, 发现了这些研究结果的共同之处: 研究提升了教师和学习者的幸福感和学习者的语言水平。本研究得出的一项重要启示是积极心理学关照下的干预活动只有满足学习者个体需求, 才能发挥最佳功能。

关键词: 积极心理学; 幸福感; 干预; 情绪; 标志性人格; 品味; 感激

一种另类的紧张——积极心理学视角下的外语学习焦虑

早崎绫 / 斯蒂文·瑞安 (日本)早稻田大学语言、艺术与科学研究生院

本研究从积极心理学视角对外语学习中的焦虑现象进行了研究, 旨在反映外语学习焦虑与外语学习者心理中其他变量之间的关系, 提高外语学习成效和提升学习者满足感。研究者对日本北部地区的大学英语学习者进行了小规模混合研究。结果显示, 对于多数外语学习者, 某些外语学习经历最能诱发焦虑, 同时也最有益且具有乐趣。因此, 本研究建议学者们重新考虑焦虑是否是阻碍语言学习的因素, 这一过于简单的观点。本研究从积极心理学视角重新审视了语言学习焦虑, 并在焦虑重构为“紧张感”的基础上, 提出了语言学习焦虑的操作性框架, 认为焦虑是取得更有成效的语言学习经历的一个核心因素。

关键词: 焦虑; 参与; 愉悦; 积极心理学; 关系; 社会比较; 紧张

英语综合成绩与分项成绩对外语愉悦和焦虑的预测作用研究

强马克·德瓦尔 (英国)伦敦大学伯贝克学院

李成陈 华中科技大学外国语学院

研究证实综合二语成绩对外语愉悦及焦虑均有显著的预测作用, 但鲜有研究考察各语言模块的成绩与二语课堂情绪的关系。鉴于此, 本研究考察综合外语成绩、综合成绩感知及听、说、读、写、词汇、语法六个语言模块成绩感知对外语愉悦及焦虑的预测作用。共 1415 名中国高中生参与问卷调查, 回归分析结果显示: 1) 相比真实的综合成绩, 综合成绩感知对外语愉悦及焦虑的预测作用; 2) 口语及语法成绩感知对两种情绪均有显著的预测作用; 3) 阅读成绩感知对外语愉悦有显著的预测作用, 但对外语焦虑无显著预测作用更强; 4) 听力、写作及词汇成绩感知对两种情绪均无显著预测作用。这些研究发现表明外语情绪研究需要考虑不同语言模块类型的不同特征。

关键词: 外语愉悦; 外语焦虑; 积极心理学; 控制 价值理论

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中国高中生英语学业韧性实证研究

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学业韧性已成为积极心理学领域的热点话题, 但在应用语言学领域仍有待探索。基于 T. Y. Kim 和 Y. K. Kim (2017) 提出的二语学习者韧性框架, 本研究对高中生英语学业韧性 (EAR) 及其与英语成绩 (EA) 的关系进行研究。研究首先对 454 名高中生进行问卷调查, 随后通过访谈进一步分析定量结果。描述性分