Enjoyment in the Foreign Language Teaching Environment: Saudi Teachers’ Perspectives*

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. Positive emotions are crucial for facilitating the learning process in foreign language (FL) classes. It has been well established that the emotion of enjoyment highly influences students and teachers in language learning environments and plays a key role in motivation.

Goals. The first objective of this study was to investigate the foreign language enjoyment (FLE) levels of FL teachers in Saudi Arabia. The second objective was to investigate the level of enjoyment felt by these teachers when they were FL students. Third, gender differences with regard to the level of enjoyment were studied. Finally, the sources of enjoyment were explored. Thirty-six teachers from different educational institutions in Saudi Arabia were surveyed.

Results. The results demonstrated that the participants experienced high levels of enjoyment when teaching FL classes; however, their enjoyment levels were significantly higher when they were FL students. A positive atmosphere at the workplace, students’ excitement about language learning, and the joy of passing knowledge to others served as sources of enjoyment among the FL teachers. In terms of their experiences as FL students, FLE stemmed from their own FL teachers’ attitudes as well as the process of learning a language applicable to real daily life. Gender was found to be only a mediator, not a predictor, of participants’ enjoyment as there were no statistically significant differences between male and female teachers.

Conclusions. Thus, the following conclusions can be drawn based on the study. First, teachers must promote positive classroom environments by perfecting their general attitudes as much as possible to enhance the feeling of enjoyment among learners.
This, in turn, will make the FL learning journey effortless and help students reach their learning goals and objectives. Furthermore, in pre-course sessions, a brief introduction that clarifies the importance of English as a foreign language is highly recommended. This will help students recognise the possible outcomes of their learning and enable them to enjoy their experiences of learning EFL. Second, institutions – i.e. schools and universities – that offer opportunities to teach EFL should provide positive working environments for their FL teachers. Institutions must also draw teachers’ attention to their role as vital knowledge resources for their students.

Key words: foreign language enjoyment, foreign language teachers, foreign language learners, positive psychology, gender, Saudi Arabia.

**Introduction**

Positive emotions in second language acquisition (SLA) were unexplored in research until MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) introduced positive psychology to the field of SLA. Following this development, many researchers started to acknowledge positive emotions as constituting a crucial component in the process of language learning (e.g. Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Fathi & Mohammaddokht, 2021). Enjoyment is more than just pleasure; it the sense of accomplishment from a hard work and the completion of a highly challenging task (Dewaele, 2022). In an SLA environment, enjoyment not only contributes to the wellbeing of those involved in the learning process but also facilitates the process itself. Enjoyment is the emotion that fuels and boosts the second language (L2) learning process and learners’ performance (Dewaele, 2022). The ways in which students and teachers respond to emotions impact students’ education, which may later affect their social, emotional, and cognitive development (Mierzwa, 2019). Teachers and students play significant roles in foreign language (FL) classrooms; thus, it is important for L2 researchers to investigate the levels and sources of enjoyment among FL teachers and students. In this study, teachers’ perspectives on the levels and sources of FLE among teachers and students were investigated to determine possible pedagogical implications.

Affective factors play a pivotal role in language comprehension (L2 listening) and language production (L2 speaking) achievement. Studies found that negative emotions (i.e., language anxiety) hinder
second language speaking development (Bashori et al., 2021). Speaking was addressed solely in relation to negative emotions such as anxiety because it is one of the most provoking tasks that make students tensed (Curry, Maher & Peeters, 2020; Mukminin et al., 2015). Studies found that positive affective factors such as learners’ enjoyment would boost students’ listening and speaking competence (Shirvan et al., 2020). Therefore, it is recommended that FL teachers need to seek for sources of negative emotions (i.e., anxiety, boredom, amotivation) to address their causes and help creating an enjoyable environment where foreign language learners can augment their positive emotions, hereby improving their language comprehension and production competence. Research demonstrates that cognitive factors are not only the main factors that decrease students’ performance in language comprehension and production, but affective factors probably do (Bashori et al., 2021), which calls researchers to investigate how language competence might be affected by affective factors. There are many attempts in the SLA literature to explore ways to alleviate the students’ boredom and anxiety by employing innovative teaching strategies to enhance speaking and listening competence such as automatic speech recognition (Bashori et al., 2021) and digital games (Bempt et al., 2022). It is clear that the feeling of enjoyment plays a pivotal role in shaping students’ views about learning English in a foreign environment (Dewaele, 2022; Li, 2022). A classroom environment that facilitates joy, pride, and interest among students can significantly push them to learn, interact with instructional materials, and engage with their peers and teachers when learning English as a foreign language (EFL), thus leading to effective self-learning and engagement, which are the keys to language acquisition (Shirvan & Taherian, 2021; Li, Dewaele & Jiang, 2020; Wang & MacIntyre, 2022). On the other hand, anxiety and boredom may demotivate students and delay the achievement of their language comprehension and language production (Li & Wei, 2022; Motiei, 2019). Recently, many studies (Li et al., 2021; Li & Han, 2022a, b; Li & Wei, 2022) attempt to investigate factors that caused FL boredom which impaired students’ progress in language comprehension and language production. Such attempts are welcome to address how affective factors might play a major role that hinder students’ learning processes and impede language comprehension and language production competence. In the present study, we try to investigate how enjoyment would affect
language learning processes from the students and teachers’ perspectives by seeking sources of enjoyment and how teachers and students alike view their EFL achievement in relation to their sense of enjoyment. Research has shown that enjoyment is a predictor of a positive learning achievement, while anxiety and boredom are negative predictors of students’ failure in language competence (Li & Wei, 2022; Li, 2022). Therefore, it is of paramount interest and to understand teachers’ perceptions of enjoyment in FL classrooms, as this would provide deeper insights into how this construct affects language achievement in an EFL context.

**Literature Review**

Drawing from the broaden-and-build theory proposed by Fredricksen (2004), it can be said that L2 enjoyment plays a significant role in facilitating FL teaching and learning. According to Fredricksen (2004), some distinct positive emotions, including joy, have the power to expand people’s momentary thought-action repertoires and develop their enduring personal resources, which can include everything from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources. Moreover, these emotions function as instruments that expel negative emotions. This theory also emphasises that joy inspires the desire to play, test one’s limits, and creativity (Fredrickson, 2001). The broaden-and-build theory, which concentrates on the role of positive emotions in positive psychology, was introduced to the field of SLA by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012). The feeling of enjoyment was found to contribute to the SLA process by enhancing learners’ personal resources, such as their willingness to invest time and effort in learning a foreign language. Apart from pushing students to test their limits by performing certain actions and improving their intellectual resources, positive emotions undo negative ones, such as anxiety, which may hinder the SLA process. Based on the broaden-and-build theory, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) emphasised that positive emotions may overcome negative ones and that positive emotions have effects that extend well beyond the enjoyment of pleasant experiences. They help students adjust to the classroom setting and increase students’ capacities for observation and verbal input. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), enjoyment can be defined as the:
“good feelings people experience when they break through the limits of homeostasis – when they do something that stretches them beyond what they were – in an athletic event, an artistic performance, a good deed, a stimulating conversation. Enjoyment, rather than pleasure, is what leads to personal growth and long-term happiness” (ibid.: 12).

Enjoyment has also been defined as a positive affective state that occurs when a person engages in an experience or event that fulfils a want, objective, or need, such as the need for pleasure, meaning, security, safety, sustenance, esteem, belongingness, or love (Smith, Harrison & Bryant, 2014). However, there is no unanimous agreement on how to define enjoyment; all that is agreed upon is its conception as a positive feeling that people may experience.

**Enjoyment in Relation to FL Learning**

The importance of affective factors in the field of SLA has increased due to researchers’ efforts to enhance the learning process, with the aim of understanding what goes on inside learners’ minds (Mohsen, 2021a; 2021b). The role of positive emotions in classroom contexts was neglected by SLA researchers until the emergence of positive psychology drove them to pay attention to such emotions. Pekrun et al. (2002) attempted to incorporate positive emotions into the field of SLA with the following argument:

“Educational settings are of specific importance for shaping human self-regulation and development, and students’ and teachers’ positive emotions can be assumed to be central to attaining these educational goals. However, educational psychology and educational research in general were no exception in neglecting positive emotions. ... positive emotions related to learning and achievement have rarely been analyzed” (ibid.: 149).

Many researchers have explored enjoyment as a part of positive psychology. Pekrun et al. (2017) reported that enjoyment plays a major role in students’ achievements. Positive activating emotions (e.g., enjoyment of learning) are expected to help students retain cognitive resources and focus their attention on the learning activity as well as boost interest and intrinsic motivation and enhance the deep learning process; as a result, these emotions are considered to be positive influencers of students’ academic achievements (ibid.).
Guided by the broaden-and-build theory, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) suggested that if teachers design activities that students find enjoyable, it will, in turn, create an optimal learning in the language classroom. According to them, positive emotions enable students to absorb language. Dewaele (2019) conducted a study on Spanish students of EFL to measure their willingness to communicate and found that enjoyment in FL learning increased their willingness to communicate. A higher level of FLE was found to be directly correlated to a higher willingness to communicate (ibid.). Therefore, it is likely that students’ willingness to communicate indirectly contributes to the attainment of foreign language success (ibid.). In this vein, another Motiei (2019) investigated the effects of a high level of enjoyment in the classroom context and found that students with high levels of FLE experienced less FL classroom anxiety.

Furthermore, it is worth determining whether FLE can affect FL performance. To this end, Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) conducted a study with 341 FL learners at two secondary schools in London as well as university-level learners in Saudi Arabia. Their findings revealed a positive correlation between FLE and student performance and achievement in FL classrooms (ibid.). Li and Wei (2022) found enjoyment to be a significant factor in aiding FL achievements and, in contrast, boredom and anxiety to be the two leading factors that negatively affect students’ Fl learning outcomes.

Learners’ positive emotions may be affected by several factors, such as their L2 proficiency levels, attitudes towards teachers, cultural backgrounds (Li, 2022), attainment and utility values (Dong et al., 2022), and resilience and wellbeing (Ergün & Dewaele, 2018). According to Macklem (2015), eachers tend to be more aware of feelings of anxiety than of boredom among their students, and this may negatively affect students’ achievement levels. Students’ cultural and philosophical views towards studying and their future careers may play major roles in shaping their feelings of enjoyment or boredom. Parents and teachers should enhance motivation and engage students in classroom activities, thus building positive attitudes towards studying in general and FL in particular. Considering that student engagement in the classroom is key to successful learning achievement, studies have assessed whether enjoyment helps students engage in FL classroom activities. For example, Wang (2022) found that Chinese EFL learners’ perceived enjoyment
was positively correlated with their academic engagement levels and learning achievements. In addition, students’ academic motivation played a pivotal role in influencing their academic achievements (ibid.). With respect to gender, Dewaele et al. (2016) argued that it is difficult to form a conclusion about the differences between male and female students’ FLE levels based on the existing literature. However, many researchers have attempted to determine the differences between male and female learners with regard to FLE. For example, in Dewaele et al.’s (2016) study of approximately 1736 learners worldwide, female learners experienced higher levels of FLE than their male counterparts. Differing from the findings of Dewaele et al. (2016), Motiei (2019) – who studied the correlations between anxiety and enjoyment on one hand and performance and individual differences in adult education on the other – found no significant connection between gender and FLE. Li (2022) and Mierzwa (2019) found no significant relationship between gender and FLE in the Chinese and Polish contexts respectively.

In the Saudi context, Bensalem (2021) investigated whether gender affects the FLE of EFL learners as well as the sources of FLE. The results revealed that both female and male learners had the same level of FLE. In addition, the findings support the idea that self-perceived proficiency is a predictor of FLE (ibid.). Finally, FLE has barely been explored in Saudi Arabia, as most studies have focused only on negative emotions and not positive ones. This lack of interest in such an important set of emotions and the lack of research in the Saudi FL context drove us to investigate the levels and sources of learners’ FLE based on Saudi FL teachers’ perspectives.

**Enjoyment in Relation to FL Teaching**

Educational contexts can be vital to achieving human self-regulation and growth, and positive emotions among students and teachers are particularly important for attaining these educational aims (Pekrun et al., 2002). Teachers’ sense of enjoyment is very important, as they are responsible for delivering knowledge to students, managing FL classrooms, and facilitating a positive environment. Therefore, the positive emotions of teachers need to be given critical attention by researchers, administrators, and policymakers (Frenzel et al., 2009). Concerning the need to preserve their wellbeing, it has been found that students who hold positive attitudes towards their teachers and
are taught by happy teachers have high levels of FLE (Li, 2022). Frenzel et al. (2009) also confirmed that the quality of teaching is directly related to teacher’s enjoyment. This is a crucial reason for measuring and enhancing FL teachers’ enjoyment levels. In addition, teachers who experience enjoyment are more supportive of their students, as they focus on providing exciting lectures in addition to cognitively challenging and comprehensible lessons, and thus augment the chances for autonomous behaviour among their students. Moreover, teachers enjoy teaching when their students make progress (Chen, 2020). According to Sutton, Mudrey-Camino and Knight (2009), teachers who experience anxiety and boredom in the classroom have a much different teaching experience than their peers who experience feelings like joy or a lack of anger.

Mierzwa (2019) examined FL teachers’ enjoyment levels and the relationship between gender and FLE and found that FL teaching enjoyment was slightly lower than FL learning enjoyment. However, gender was found to have no notable effect on foreign language teaching enjoyment (ibid.). FL teachers’ positive emotions, namely enjoyment, are still underresearched and have received less attention than expected throughout the years. This variable deserves more investigation, especially in the Saudi context. Since teachers’ emotions play a major role in their delivery of FL classes and are the main factor facilitating learning objectives, investigations into the levels and sources of FLE should be encouraged. Consequently, the present research was carried out to enrich this important area of concern.

**Research Questions**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the enjoyment levels of teachers in Saudi Arabia while teaching/learning a foreign language. The secondary aims were to investigate the sources of FLE while teaching/learning based on teachers’ perspectives and to determine whether the gender variable mitigates participants’ responses. In other words, the study looked into whether male and female responses vary and whether these differences are statistically significant. Accordingly, we aimed to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1.** How do FL teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive their levels of enjoyment while learning/teaching a foreign language?
RQ2. How does gender mediate teachers’ responses?
RQ3. According to teachers, what are the sources of FLE while teaching/learning?

Methodology

Design
In the current study, a descriptive survey approach was adopted. The survey was administered to a sample of EFL teachers and learners to elicit their perceptions about the levels and sources of FLE. The survey consisted of 17 statements that employed a 5-point Likert-scale. The survey was divided into three sections: level of enjoyment, sources of enjoyment for teachers, and sources of enjoyment for students. These items addressed the research questions of the study.

Participants
The participants were EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia who had to have learned English as a foreign language, regardless of their nationalities. 38 participants (13 male, 25 female) were recruited for the study. Participants who had never taught EFL in Saudi Arabia and/or did not learn English as a foreign language were excluded, resulting in an overall sample size of 37. The participants voluntarily responded to an online questionnaire.

Instruments
A quantitative approach was adopted in this study, and a structured (closed-ended) online survey consisting of three sections was created specifically for the purpose of the study. The first section consisted of three questions related to the participants’ demographic data, specifically their gender, subject they taught, years of teaching in Saudi Arabia, and location of studying English. In the second section, six statements on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, were given to rate the degree of FLE. The first three statements measured teachers’ FLE: as a teacher, I enjoy teaching English as a foreign language; as a teacher, I feel happy about my students’ learning progress in EFL; as a teacher, I look forward to FL classes. The last three statements focused on the participants’ enjoyment
levels as learners and were presented in the past tense: as a student, I enjoyed learning English as a FL; as a student, I studied more than required because I enjoyed learning EFL; as a student, I got excited when my learning was going well.

In the last section, the participants were provided with a list of potential sources of FLE. They were asked to choose three sources at most (out of four) and one at least. With regard to teaching, the potential sources were as follows: positive atmosphere at the workplace, the joy of passing knowledge to others, challenging materials, and students’ excitement. With regard to learning, the participants were provided the following list to assess learning real-life language, teachers’ attitudes, peers were nice, knowledge about other cultures (as English is an international language). The details are given in Tables 3 and 4.

**Procedure**

To ensure that the survey targeted a wide population and reached the participants, the questionnaire was shared via Telegram and WhatsApp, and 38 responses were obtained from random anonymous participants, both male and female. The participants underwent a brief orientation on the goal of the study and their voluntary participation and were told that responding meant that they consented to participate. They were asked not to give their names so that their identities would remain undisclosed.

**Data analysis**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 was used to analyse the data in this study. A p-value of 0.05 was considered statistically significant. Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the sample’s perceptions of FLE, and inferential statistics (independent t-tests) were used to determine differences based on the gender variable. Before answering the research questions, the demographic data of the participants were collated, as depicted in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, most of the respondents were female, accounting for 63.8%, while males represented only 36.11%. The vast majority of respondents taught English in Saudi Arabia and had studied EFL (97.2%).
Table 1
Personal Data of the Respondents (n=38)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taught English in Saudi Arabia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learned English as a foreign language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

RQ1. How do FL teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive their levels of enjoyment while learning/teaching a foreign language?

Means, standard deviations (SDs), frequencies, and percentages were used to calculate the participants’ views regarding the level of enjoyment involved in teaching and learning a foreign language. Their answers are depicted in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, most of the respondents (58.3%) agreed that, as teachers, they enjoyed teaching English as a foreign language. 38.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with the second statement, “as a teacher, I feel happy about the students’ learning progress in FL.” Furthermore, most respondents (63.9%) agreed that they look forward to teaching FL classes.

Regarding their journeys in learning EFL, 50.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that they enjoyed learning English as a FL when they were students. 50.0% strongly agreed that they studied more than required because they enjoyed learning EFL. Last, many of the respondents strongly agreed that they got excited when learning was going well; this item represented the highest percentage among all items, with the participants accounting for 80.6% of the total sample. This indicates that the teachers’ EFL learning journeys were far more enjoyable than their experiences as FL instructors.
In terms of teaching, the highest mean was 4.36 (strongly agree) in favour of the item, “As a teacher, I enjoy teaching English as a foreign language”, while the lowest mean was 4.06 (agree) for the item, “As a teacher, I feel happy about my students’ learning progress in FL”. The recorded mean was 4.17 for the item, “As a teacher, I look forward to FL classes”.

In terms of learning EFL, “As a student, I enjoyed learning English as a FL” recorded a mean of 4.42. For the item, “As a student, I studied more than required because I enjoyed learning FL”, the mean was 4.33. Finally, “As a student, I got excited when my learning was going well” recorded the highest mean of 4.78. This asserts that the teachers’ enjoyment levels while learning an FL were much higher than their enjoyment levels while teaching an FL. The total mean for the level of enjoyment was 4.36 ± 0.26, corresponding to strongly agree.

Since respondents were allowed to choose more than a source of enjoyment, most of the respondents (36.1%) specified the following sources of enjoyment as FL instructors: positive atmosphere at the workplace, the joy of passing knowledge to others, and students’

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**Table 2**

*Level of Enjoyment (n=36)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a teacher, I enjoy teaching English as a foreign language.</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.36 ± 0.54</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a teacher, I feel happy about my students’ learning progress in FL.</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.06 ± 0.92</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a teacher, I look forward to FL classes.</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.17 ± 0.66</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, I enjoyed learning English as a FL.</td>
<td>18 (50.0%)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.42 ± 0.65</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, I studied more than required because I enjoyed learning FL.</td>
<td>18 (50.0%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.33 ± 0.79</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, I got excited when my learning was going well.</td>
<td>29 (80.6%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.78 ± 0.49</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total mean</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.36 ± 0.25</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
excitement (see Table 3). Challenging materials represented the least-chosen source of FL teaching enjoyment.

Table 3
Possible Sources of Enjoyment as a Teacher (n=36)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive atmosphere at the workplace</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive atmosphere at the workplace, challenging materials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive atmosphere at the workplace, students’ excitement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive atmosphere at the workplace, students’ excitement, challenging materials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive atmosphere at the workplace, the joy of passing knowledge to others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive atmosphere at the workplace, the joy of passing knowledge to others, challenging materials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive atmosphere at the workplace, the joy of passing knowledge to theirs, students’ excitement</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ excitement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The joy of passing knowledge to others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The joy of passing knowledge to others, students’ excitement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The joy of passing knowledge to others, students’ excitement, challenging materials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Possible Sources of Enjoyment as a Student (n=36)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about other cultures (as English is an international language)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning a real-life language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning a real-life language, knowledge about other cultures (as English is an international language)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s attitude</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s attitude, knowledge about other cultures (as English is an international language)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s attitude, learning a real-life language</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s attitude, learning a real-life language, knowledge about other cultures (as English is an international language)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s attitude, nice peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 5 shows, most of the respondents (33.3%) chose the following sources of enjoyment as students: teacher’s attitude, learning a real-life language. This was followed by knowledge about other cultures (as English is an international language). The least frequently chosen source of enjoyment was the statement “peers are nice”.

### Table 5

**Gender Differences in the Level of Enjoyment (n=36)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of enjoyment</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25.15</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>-1.671</td>
<td>0.469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26.60</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5, the mean value for male participants was 25.15 and the standard deviation was 2.94, while the mean recorded for female participants was 26.65 and the standard deviation was 2.37, indicating that the female participants’ responses conveyed a slightly higher degree of enjoyment than the male participants’ responses. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the male and female participants’ levels of enjoyment ($p=0.469$, $> 0.05$).

## Discussion

This study was conducted to answer three research questions. The results were analysed based on these questions and are discussed herein. The results showed that the FL teachers in Saudi Arabia experienced relatively high levels of enjoyment while teaching and learning a FL, regardless of their gender. Regarding the first research question, FL teachers in Saudi Arabia were found to experience high levels of enjoyment while learning and teaching, but the levels were higher while learning than while teaching. This is consistent with Mierzwa’s (2019) study, in which FLE levels were generally high but displayed a difference between FL learning and teaching in favour of the learning journey. However, these results do not align with the findings of Bensalem (2021), whose mean scores for FLE levels among Saudi learners were lower than the means reported in this study.

The second research question investigated whether gender affects FLE levels. Surprisingly, no significant effect of gender was found,
as both male and female respondents experienced the same levels of FLE in both teaching and learning contexts. Therefore, our results contradict the studies of Mierzwa (2019), Dewaele et al. (2016), and Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018). In the present study, both females and males witnessed the same level of enjoyment, and this supports Bensalem’s (2021) report that the level of FLE in relation to learning is the same for both male and female students.

The third research question focused on the sources of FLE while teaching/learning. With respect to the teachers’ FL teaching journeys, the main sources of enjoyment were found to be a positive atmosphere at the workplace, the joy of passing knowledge to others, and students’ excitement. Frenzel et al. (2009) reported that teachers’ enjoyment is highly related to their perceptions of student performance, motivation, and discipline; this is consistent with our findings, which showed that students’ excitement provided their teachers with enjoyment and enhanced their perception of FLE. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that Frenzel et al.’s (2009) findings were not related to FL teachers but to teachers in general; FL teachers’ sources of enjoyment lack investigation and have received little attention from researchers. This gap opens a window for future studies on the topic to obtain more reliable findings.

During the EFL teachers’ learning journeys, the main sources of enjoyment were reported to be their teachers’ attitudes and learning a real-life language. These were the most frequently chosen sources by the teachers in this study. These findings are in line with previous findings (Dewaele, 2022; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2017; Bensalem, 2021; Mierzwa, 2019) that the level of FLE depends highly on who the teacher is and his/her attitudes towards FL. Knowledge about other cultures (as English is an international language) is a secondary source of FLE. The effect of friendly peers on FLE was the least frequently indicated source among the participants; this aligns with Mierzwa’s (2019) report that peers and classroom atmosphere are less frequently mentioned sources of FLE.

**Conclusions and Implications**

The present study examined the FLE levels of teachers in Saudi Arabia while teaching and learning and investigated their sources
of enjoyment as FL students and teachers. Positive emotions gained importance in the field of SLA as a result of their emergence in the field of psychology. Positive psychology exists and spreads throughout universities and schools to strengthen the learning and teaching process and enhance learners’ linguistic knowledge (Dewaele et al., 2019). Enjoyment, a part of positive psychology, is an important factor in facilitating and easing FL classrooms. The quantitative findings showed that FL teachers in Saudi Arabia experience high levels of enjoyment while teaching and learning, regardless of gender. However, the level of enjoyment while learning is notably higher than while teaching. A positive atmosphere at the workplace, the joy of passing knowledge to others, and students’ excitement constitute the main sources of FLE while teaching. Teachers’ attitudes and the process of learning a real-life language were found to be the main sources of FLE while learning.

Thus, the following conclusions can be drawn based on the study. First, teachers must promote positive classroom environments by perfecting their general attitudes as much as possible to enhance the feeling of enjoyment among learners. This, in turn, will make the FL learning journey effortless and help students reach their learning goals and objectives. Furthermore, in pre-course sessions, a brief introduction that clarifies the importance of English as a foreign language is highly recommended. This will help students recognise the possible outcomes of their learning and enable them to enjoy their experiences of learning EFL. Second, institutions – i.e. schools and universities – that offer opportunities to teach EFL should provide positive working environments for their FL teachers. Institutions must also draw teachers’ attention to their role as vital knowledge resources for their students.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Projects

The current study has some limitations that may affect the generalisability of the findings. Besides the limited number of participants, an important variable was not considered in the learning context: age while learning. This is important because the learning experiences of children and adults may not be the same. As the sources of FLE in this study were provided to the participants, mixed-methods
research should be conducted in the future to allow participants to write down their own sources of FLE. Different instructional data instruments, such as interviews, should be applied in future projects to obtain more reliable findings.

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ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL STANDARDS

Ethics Declarations. The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki (1964). The study was approved by the ethical committee board at Najran University. All the participants were asked for written consent/permission to take part in the study. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Data availability statement. Data cannot be shared for ethical/privacy reasons.

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Consent for Publication. The authors approve of this submission and, conditional upon the decision made by the editorial board from the peer-review process, consent to the publication of the current work. The work has not been submitted to other journals in consideration for publication.

References


**Appendix A**

Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale.
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

**Strongly agree / Agree / Neutral / disagree / Strongly disagree**

As a teacher, I enjoy teaching English as a foreign language.
As a teacher, I feel happy about my students' learning progress in FL.
As a teacher, I look forward to FL classes.
As a student, I enjoyed learning English as a FL.
As a student, I studied more than required because I enjoyed learning FL.
As a student, I got excited when my learning was going well.

**Appendix B**

Choose the possible sources of your enjoyment as a teacher. You may choose more than one.

- Positive atmosphere at the workplace.
- The joy of passing knowledge to others.
- Students’ excitement
- Challenging materials

Choose the possible sources of your enjoyment as a student. You may choose more than one.

- Teachers’ attitude
- Learning real-life language
- Nice peer
- Knowledge about other cultures -as English is an international language.
АНОТАЦІЯ

Вступ. Позитивні емоції мають вирішальне значення для полегшення процесу оволодіння іноземною мовою. Доведено, що емоція задоволення сильно впливає на студентів та викладачів у середовищі вивчення мови та відіграє ключову роль у мотивації, зокрема мовленневій.

Цілі. У науковій розвідці було поставлено кілька цілей. По-перше, дослідження рівня задоволення від вивчення іноземної мови у викладачів іноземних мов у Саудівській Арабії. По-друге, дослідження рівня задоволення, який відчували ці викладачі, коли вони були студентами і вивчали іноземну мову. По-третє, вивчення гендерних відмінностей щодо рівня задоволення від оволодіння іноземною мовою. По-четверте, вивчення джерел задоволення у процесі вивчення іноземної мови. Було опитано 36 викладачів з різних навчальних закладів Саудівської Аравії.

Результати. Результати продемонстрували, що учасники дослідження відчують високий рівень задоволення від викладання англійської мови як іноземної, проте рівень задоволення був значно вищим, коли вони були студентами. Позитивна атмосфера на робочому місці, зацікавленість студентів у вивченні мови та радість від передачі знань іншим служили джерелами задоволення для викладачів англійської мови. Що стосується їхнього досвіду як студентів, які вивчали іноземну мову, то задоволення від вивчення іноземної мови зумовлене ставленням викладачів іноземної мови, а також процесом вивчення іноземної мови, яка використовується у реальному повсякденному житті. Було виявлено, що стать є лише посередником, а не предиктором задоволення від вивчення іноземної мови, оскільки не було виявлено статистично значущих відмінностей між викладачами-чоловіками та викладачами-жінками.

Висновки. Таким чином, на основі проведеного дослідження можна зробити наступні висновки. По-перше, вчителі повинні сприяти створенню позитивної атмосфери в аудіторії, максимально вдосконалюючи своє загальне ставлення, щоб підвищити відчуття задоволення студентів від вивчення іноземної мови. Це, в свою чергу, зробить процес вивчення іноземної мови легким і допоможе студентам досягти своїх навчальних цілей і завдань. Крім того, на заняттях перед початком вивчення курсу настійно рекомендується проводити короткий вступ, який пояснює важливість англійської мови як іноземної. Це допоможе студентам усвідомити можливі результати їхнього навчання та дозволить їм отримати задоволення від процесу вивчення англійської мови професійного спрямування. По-друге, навчальні заклади (школи та університети), які пропонують можливість викладати англійську мову професійного спрямування, повинні забезпечити позитивне робоче мовленневе середовище для своїх викладачів. Заклади також повинні звернутися увагу викладачів на їхню роль як життєво важливих джерел мовних знань для своїх студентів.

Ключові слова: задоволення від вивчення іноземної мови, вивчення іноземної мови, викладачі іноземної мови, студенти, які вивчають іноземну мову, позитивна психологія, гендер, Саудівська Аравія.