Journal of Education and Future
year: 2025, issue: 27, 107-120
DOI: 10.30786/jef.1404254

Investigating the Freshmen's Anxiety and Enjoyment through Online Speaking Skills Courses*

Article Type	Received Date	Accepted Date
Research	13.12.2023	29.07.2024

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Abstract

This quantitative research investigated freshmen's Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) through online speaking skills courses in order to promote the quality of online foreign language speaking skills courses by determining hindering and facilitating factors. The present research sample consists of 722 participants from 33 universities' English Language Teacher Education Programs. It was reached that a significant negative correlation was found between FLE and FLSA. In terms of gender, no significant correlation was found between participants' gender and their FLE and FLSA. When the region variable effect on FLE and FLSA was analyzed, a significant correlation was detected between regions where the participants' universities were placed and FLE and FLSA. The analysis also revealed that there was a significant correlation between the degree of plurilingualism and FLE and FLSA. Furthermore, a significant correlation was found between the perceived level of English proficiency and FLE and FLSA which showed that a higher perceived proficiency level was positively correlated with a higher FLE level and vice versa. Moreover, a significant correlation was revealed between speaking skills classroom environment preferences for speaking skills courses and FLE and FLSA; the ones with online classroom preference instead of face-to-face classroom showed higher FLE. In line with the results, pedagogical implications were offered.

Keywords: Foreign language speaking anxiety, foreign language enjoyment, online foreign language learning, undergraduate ELT students.

* This research is derived from the first author's master's thesis.

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Birinci Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Yabancı Dilde Kaygı Duyma ve Keyif Almalarının Çevrimiçi Konuşma Becerileri Dersi Üzerinden İncelenmesi [*]

Makale Türü	Başvuru Tarihi	Kabul Tarihi
Araştırma	13.12.2023	29.07.2024

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Öz

Bu nicel araştırma, online konuşma becerileri dersleri aracılığıyla birinci sınıf öğrencilerin Yabancı Dilde Keyif Alma (YDKA) ve Yabancı Dil Konuşma Kaygısı (YDKK) inceleyerek çevrimiçi yabancı dil konuşma becerileri derslerinin kalitesini artırmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu doğrultuda, engelleyici ve kolaylaştırıcı faktörlerin belirlenmesi hedeflenmiştir. Bu araştırmanın örneklemini, 33 üniversitenin İngilizce Öğretmen Eğitimi Programları'ndan 722 katılımcı oluşturmaktadır. Yapılan analizler sonucunda YDKAve YDKK arasında önemli bir negatif korelasyon bulunduğu belirlenmiştir. Cinsiyet açısından, katılımcıların cinsiyeti ile YDKA ve YDKK arasında anlamlı bir korelasyon bulunmamıştır. Bölge değişkeninin YDKA ve YDKK üzerindeki etkisi analiz edildiğinde, katılımcıların üniversitelerinin bulunduğu bölgeler ile YDKA ve YDKK arasında anlamlı bir korelasyon saptanmıştır. Ayrıca, çokdillilik derecesi ile YDKA ve YDKK arasında anlamlı bir korelasyon bulunduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Dahası, algılanan İngilizce yeterlilik düzeyi ile YDKA ve YDKK arasında anlamlı bir korelasyon bulunmuş ve daha yüksek algılanan yeterlilik düzeyinin daha yüksek bir YDKA düzeyi ile pozitif korelasyon gösterdiği görülmüştür. Ayrıca, konuşma becerileri sınıf ortamı tercihlerinin YDKA ve YDKK ile anlamlı bir korelasyon gösterdiği ve yüz yüze sınıf yerine çevrimiçi sınıf tercih edenlerin daha yüksek YDKA'ya sahip olduğu belirlenmiştir. Sonuçlar doğrultusunda pedagojik öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yabancı dil konuşma kaygısı, yabancı dilde keyif alma, çevrimiçi yabancı dil öğrenme, İngilizce öğretmenliği lisans öğrencileri

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Introduction

The global pandemic has disrupted the education sector, compelling stakeholders since the start of 2020, including those in higher education, to grapple with the complexities of transitioning to online learning. The careful implementation of online pedagogies becomes crucial, considering technical infrastructure, digital literacy skills, and the engagement of both educators and students. English language teacher education programs face unique challenges in adapting to online education, requiring faculty and students to navigate a new learning environment. Unlike the straightforward nature of 'two plus two equals four,' foreign language classrooms demand a nuanced approach that acknowledges the indispensability of individual differences. The process of foreign language learning is inherently social, influenced by various components and the combined characteristics of learners, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of emotions in this educational journey.

Oxford (2015) emphasized the integral blend of cognition and emotion in effective foreign language learning. While existing research has predominantly focused on negative emotions, particularly foreign language anxiety, impacting learning negatively, positive emotions like foreign language enjoyment have been overshadowed. Within this context, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) play crucial roles in shaping learners' experiences. Horwitz et al. (1986) introduced a tripartite framework for Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), encompassing communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety within FLSA. Communication apprehension, specifically speaking anxiety, causes discomfort in verbal tasks. Fear of negative evaluation impedes participation in language activities, particularly those involving speaking skills, while test anxiety transforms communicative tasks in EFL classes. Recognizing speaking anxiety as a significant affective sub-dimension of FLA is crucial; it directly links to the fear of speaking in a foreign language within a community, influencing learners' experiences in English as a Foreign Language classrooms (EFL) (Horwitz, 2017).

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been a notable shift in focus toward understanding diverse emotions in the EFL classroom (Dewaele, 2010). This coincided with the emergence of positive psychology (PP) by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi in 2014, introducing a strength-based approach, emphasizing the development of positive qualities rather than fixing negatives (Gao & Zhang, 2020; Seligman, 2002; MacIntyre, 2021). This contemporary perspective has significantly impacted second/foreign language teaching, expanding affective emotions research to include positive experiences (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Termed a "positive renaissance" in psychology and an "affective turn" in the EFL/ESL research field (Dewaele & Li, 2018; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014), this turn signifies a comprehensive examination of both negative and positive emotions (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Contrary to misconceptions, PP in the EFL context doesn't ignore obstacles but seeks strengths within them to foster positivity and language learning, aligning with broader positive psychology concerns (Komorowska, 2016; Seligman, 2011).

For a deeper understanding of foreign language enjoyment (FLE), it is defined as a positive emotion that "can help dissipate the lingering effects of negative emotional arousal, helping to promote personal resiliency in the face of difficulties" (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 241). FLE is considered a vital element of achievement emotions (Pekrun et al., 2007) to provide psychological safety in navigating an unfamiliar linguistic world. Therefore, enjoyment is seen as an emotional key to unlocking language learning potential. In the realm of positive language learning emotions, FLE has gained significant attention, particularly in relation to FLA, prompting recent research to explore potential correlations between FLE and other factors. Notably, it is predominantly associated with FLA, prompting an exploration of potential correlations between FLE and other factors in recent research endeavors.

This study sought to explore freshmen's FLE and FLSA within the context of online speaking skills courses. In alignment with the research objective, the research questions were formulated as follows:

1)What are the FLE and FLSA dispositions of the freshmen?

2)What is the correlation between FLE and FLSA in the online speaking skills class context?

3)To what extent is there an effect of gender on FLE and FLSA?

4)Is there a difference in the effect on FLE and FLSA according to the seven regions in Turkey?

5)To what extent does plurilingualism affect FLE and FLSA?

6)What is the effect of the perceived level of English proficiency on FLE and FLSA?

7)What is the role of the classroom environment preference on the freshmen's speaking skills on their level of FLE and FLSA?

Method

Research Design

Utilizing quantitative methods for their systematic, reliable, generalizable, and replicable qualities (Dörnyei, 2007), the chosen research design aligns with the study's aim to objectively compare and generalize results for freshmen (Gall et al., 2007). Adopting a correlational design, the study examines the correlation between FLE and FLSA levels in preservice English teachers, incorporating variables such as gender, university location, plurilingualism, proficiency perception, and classroom preferences. Online questionnaires, known for their advantages in extensive data collection (Dewaele et al., 2018), are employed, and statistical tests are applied to systematically explore the data. This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough analysis, drawing on established methodologies and contemporary research insights.

Research Sample

To enhance the robustness of the study's findings, researchers extended their scope beyond a limited geographical and school context, opting to conduct the study across seven regions in Türkiye. This broader approach, involving 722 participants from 33 universities, aims to improve the generalizability of results by capturing a more diverse and representative sample.

Regarding the distribution of the participants considering universities and regions, of the participants 68 (9,41 %) are from Marmara Region, 276 (38,22 %) from Blacksea Region, 26 (3.6 %) from Aegean Region, 176 (24,37%) from Central Anatolia Region, 65 (9%) from Mediterranian Region, 59 (8,17%) from Eastern Anatolia Region and 52 (7,20) from Southern Anatolia Region.

In line with the analyses of the participants' demographics form, it is revealed that 526 (72,85 %) of the participants are female, while 196 (27,15 %) of the participants are male. When the degree of plurilingualism is regarded, 101 (13,98 %) participants can speak only one foreign language, 486 (67,31 %) of them can speak two foreign languages, while 135 (18,69 %) of them can speak three or more languages.

Participants are asked to compare their FL performance with that of their peers in their FL class ranging from extremely poor, insufficient, sufficient, satisfactory, and excellent, self-perceived English language proficiency based on the respondents' self-evaluations of how proficient they are in the FL reveal that participants mostly regard their levels as sufficient (n =350; 48,47 %) and satisfactory (n =267; 36,98 %). Alternatively stated, these are good FL freshmen. However, 8 (1,1 %) participants are extremely poor, 70 (9.69 %) of them are insufficient, and 27 (3,73 %) are excellent, according to their self-report.

Lastly, based on classroom environment preferences, 130 (18 %) of the participants prefer online FL speaking courses, while 592 (81 %) prefer face-to-face speaking skills classes.

Research Instruments and Procedures

The survey comprised four sections: a consent form to inform participants about the study's scope, aim, duration, and expectations; a demographics form to collect personal background information; the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES), designed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), to assess enjoyment levels; and the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSAS), initially developed by Huang (2004) and adapted by Balemir (2009), to measure speaking anxiety levels. A pre-prepared consent form was administered via Google Forms before the main scales, providing relevant information about the research. Participants shared demographic details, including gender, age,

plurilingualism, proficiency levels, online class experiences, and preferences for face-to-face or online environments.

As to the research procedures, upon securing approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee, collaboration with academics from target universities facilitated participant recruitment for this research. The questionnaire, hosted on GoogleDocs, remained accessible online for three months (January-March) in 2021, adopting the snowball sampling method. The online questionnaire was chosen for its suitability with large samples, and participants volunteered, ensuring higher response quality (Wilson & Dewaele, 2010).

Data Analysis

Following a quantitative design, the data underwent analysis in SPSS version 25. Descriptive analyses provided a participant profile, including means and standard deviations. Pearson correlation coefficients were then employed for numerical description, correlations, and construct comparisons. Skewness and Kurtosis checks confirmed normality, meeting the acceptable range (-1.5 to +1.5).

The research utilized a correlational design, examining the relationship between two continuous variables (Larson-Hall, 2010). One-way ANOVA with post hoc Tukey tests and independent t-tests explored demographic data relationships. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess variable relationships.

Ethical Procedures

Adhering to ethical standards, the present study strictly follows guidelines from the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive." Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the research application (Serial number: 2020/788).

Results

The findings of the research were presented in line with the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the FLE and FLSA dispositions of the freshmen?

Descriptive statistics were conducted for FLE and FLSA. While the mean score was found as 77.88 (highly enjoyed) in FLES, in FLSAS mean score was found as 91.07 (moderately anxious). The results were shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Disposition of the level of the freshmen in FLE and FLSA scales*

Name of the Scale	*n*	*M*	*SD*
FLES	722	77.88	9.62
FLSAS	724	91.07	16.00

Note.*M*=Mean, *SD*=Standart Deviation

Research Question 2: What is the correlation between FLE and FLSA in the online speaking skills class contexts?

Pearson Correlation Test was conducted to determine the general correlation between FLE and FLSA. According to the analysis, a significant negative Pearson correlation ($r=-.50$ $p< .001$) was found between FLE and FLSA. The result of the correlational analysis is set out in Table 2.

Table 2. *Correlation between FLE and FLSA levels of the freshmen*

	FLE	FLSA
FLE	1	-.499**
FLSA	-.499**	1

** p<.001

Research Question 3: To what extent is there an effect of gender on FLE and FLSA?

Independent samples t-test is conducted to find out the effect of gender on FLE and FLSA of the freshmen. In line with the test analysis, there are no significant gender differences considering FLE, which means that the gender of the freshmen does not seem to have any effects on their FLE; however, in terms of FLSA, anxiety mean scores of female participants (M=93.15) exceeds anxiety mean scores of male participants (M=85.47). Table 3 below presents statistical data on significance values explained above.

Table 3. *Results of Independent Samples t-test for the effect of gender on FLE and FLSA of the freshmen*

Name of Scales	Gender	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
FLES	Female	526	78.12	9.43	1.09	.27
	Male	196	77.23	10.11	1.06	.29
FLSAS	Female	526	93.15	15.60	5.87	.00
	Male	196	85.47	15.74	5.84	.00

Note. *M*= Mean, *SD*=Standart Deviation

Research Question 4: Are there differences in the effect on FLE and FLSA according to the seven regions in Turkey?

After grouping 33 different universities into seven regions, One-way ANOVA was conducted, and it was revealed that there seems to be a significant difference according to regions in terms of FLE (F= 4.23, p<0.01), and the analysis showed a significant correlation between regions and FLSA (F= 1.97, p > 0.01). See Table 4.

Table 4. *Results of One-way ANOVA for correlation between regions and FLE and FLSA*

		Sum of Squares	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
FLE	Between Groups	2297.84	6	382.97	4.23	.00
	Within Groups	63584.44	703	90.44		
	Total	65882,28	709			
FLSA	Between Groups	3017.03	6	502.83	1.97	.067
	Within Groups	179463.31	705	254.55		
	Total	182480.34	711			

Note.*MS*=Mean Square, Groups: Southern Anatolia, Mediterranian, Central Anatolia, Marmara, Black Sea, Eastern Anatolia, Aegean

Tukey HSD post hoc tests were conducted to demonstrate the differences between the regions, and it was provided that FLE levels are found highest in the Aegean Region (M=82.85), while the lowest in the Southern Anatolia Region (M=75.60) along with this, FLSA levels of the participants are found highest in the Central Anatolia Region (M=94.15) while the lowest in the Aegean Region (M= 88.11). See Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. *Results of Post-hoc Tukey HSD test for FLE level disposition levels of the freshmen with regard to regions*

	Regions	*n*	1	2	3
Tukey HSD-FLE	Southern Anatolia	52	75.60		
	Mediterranian	65	75.91	75.91	
	Central Anatolia	175	76.26	76.26	
	Marmara	56	77.91	77.91	77.91
	Black Sea	277	78.52	78.52	78.52
	Eastern Anatolia	59		80.97	80.97
	Aegean	26			82.85
	Sig.		.631	.058	.070

Table 6. *Results of Post-hoc Tukey HSD test for FLSA level disposition levels of the freshmen with regard to regions*

	Regions	*n*	1
Tukey HSD-FLSA	Southern Anatolia	52	92.57
	Mediterranian	65	91.60
	Central Anatolia	176	94.15
	Marmara	56	91.50
	Black Sea	277	89.19
	Eastern Anatolia	59	91.60
	Aegean	26	88.11
	Sig.		.373

In Table 5, it is seen that there was a significant difference in FLE levels between Aegean Region and Central Anatolia, Mediterranean, and Southern Anatolia; in parallel, a significant difference was revealed between Central Anatolia and Southern Anatolia. Any considerable differences were not detected according to the rest of the regions.

Research Question 5: To what extent does plurilingualism affect FLE and FLSA?

One-way ANOVA was used to investigate the effect of the number of languages known by the freshmen on FLE and FLSA; according to these results, there is a significant correlation between the number of languages known and FLE and FLSA scores. See Table 7. Therefore, Tukey HSD post hoc test analysis was conducted. According to these findings, there is a significant correlation between those who speak one language and three or more languages and between two languages and three or more languages in terms of FLE. As in FLE, there seems to be a significant relationship in FLSA. According to the comparisons of the number of languages they speak with one another, it can be seen that the FLE level of the ones who speak three or more languages seems the highest, whereas the FLSA level seems the highest in those who speak one language.

Table 7. *Results of One-way ANOVA analysis for the correlation between Plurilingualism and FLE and FLSA*

		Sum of Squares	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
FLE	Between groups	1480.11	2	740.06	8.15	.00
	Within groups	65287,92	719	90.80		
	Total	66768.03	721			
FLSA	Between groups	5803.52	2	2901.76	11.66	.00
	Within groups	179363.60	721	248.77		
	Total	185167.12	723			

Note. *MS*= Mean Square, Groups: OL= Only one language, TL= Two languages, ML= Three or more Languages

Table 8. *Results of Post-hoc Tukey HSD test for plurilingualism*

		(I)Languages Known	(J)Languages Known	Mean Difference (I-J)	*SE*	*p*
FLE	Tukey HSD	OL	TL	-.352	1.04	.939
			ML	-3.951*	1.25	.005
		TL	OL	.352	1.04	.939
			ML	-3.599	.93	.00
		ML	OL	3.951*	1.25	.00
			TL	3.599*	.93	.00
FLSA	Tukey HSD	OL	TL	3.46715	1.72	.11
			ML	9.48192*	2.07	.00
		TL	OL	-3.46715	1.72	.11
			ML	6.01477*	1.53	.00
		ML	OL	-9.48192*	2.07	.00
			TL	-6.01477*	1.53	.00
			TL	-6.01477*	1.53	.00

Note. *SE*=Standart Error, OL= Only one language, TL= Two languages, ML= Three or more Languages *p<.0

Research Question 6: What is the effect of the perceived level of English proficiency on FLE and FLSA?

One-way ANOVA is used to explore the effect of the perceived level of proficiency of the freshmen on FLE and FLSA; according to these results, there is a significant difference between the perceived level of proficiency and FLE and FLSA.

Table 9. *Results of One-way ANOVA Analysis for Perceived Level of English Proficiency Scores*

		Sum of Squares	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
FLE	Between groups	5884.17	4	1471.04	17.32	.00
	Within groups	60883.86	717	84.92		
	Total	66768.03	721			
FLSA	Between groups	20241.86	4	5060.46	22.06	.00
	Within groups	164925.27	719	229.38		
	Total	185167.12	723			

Groups: extremely poor, insufficient, sufficient, satisfactory, excellent

As a result of revealing a significant difference, Tukey HSD post hoc tests are conducted. It has been found that there is a meaningful difference in the FLE levels of the freshmen between the ones who perceive and report their level of proficiency as extremely poor and excellent, satisfactory. Another significant difference has been detected between insufficient and sufficient, satisfactory, and excellent. Regarding FLSA, a correlation is found between extremely poor and excellent, satisfactory; insufficient and satisfactory, excellent; sufficient satisfactory, and excellent. In a common ground, both FLE and FLSA levels of the freshmen have a strong correlation with their perceived proficiency levels. It has been figured out that those whose perceived proficiency levels are excellent have high scores on FLES, and those whose perceived proficiency levels are extremely poor have higher scores in FLSAS. FLE levels increase as going downside in the five-point Likert and vice versa. See Table 10.

Table 10. *Results of the Post Hoc Tukey -HSD Test for FLE and FLSA scores according to perceived level of English proficiency*

	Perceived level of proficiency	***n***	***M***	***SD***	***SE***	***p***
Tukey HSD-FLE	extremely poor	8	67,50	11,65	4,12	.43
	sufficient	350	77,49	9,578	,51	.145
	satisfactory	267	79,53	8,743	,53	.925
	excellent	27	85,59	9,279	1,80	.108
	Total	722	77,88	9,623	,36	
Tukey HSD-FLSA	extremely poor	8	103,00	13,928	4,92	.99
	insufficient	70	99,24	13,046	1,6	.565
	sufficient	352	93,42	14,744	,79	.134
	satisfactory	267	87,29	15,341	,94	
	excellent	27	73,15	22,288	4,28	
	Total	724	91,07	16,003	,59	

Note. *SD*= Stardart Deviation, *SE*=Standart Error

Research Question 7: What is the role of the classroom environment preference of the freshmen's speaking skills on their level of FLE and FLSA?

Independent samples t-test analysis is performed to figure out the difference between the speaking classroom environment preferences of freshmen and FLES and FLSAS scores.

According to independent samples t-test analysis of the preferences, a significant difference has been found between those who prefer online speaking skills classes and face-to-face speaking skills classes in terms of FLE and FLSA scores. See Table 7. It has been apparent that the ones who prefer online speaking skills classes have higher scores in FLSAS while those who prefer face-to-face classes have higher scores in FLES, which means their FLE levels are higher than those who prefer online speaking skills classes. See Table 11.

Table 11. *Results of Independent Samples t-tests for the classroom environment preferences and FLE and FLSA*

	Classroom Preference	***n***	***M***	***SD***	***t***	***p***
Total FLE Scores	Face-to-face	593	78.28	9.51	-.24	.02
	Online	129	76.02	9.92	-.24	.02
Total FLSAS scores	Face-to-face	594	89.94	15.87	4.14	.00
	Online	130	96.23	1561	4.10	.00

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standart Deviation

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigates freshmen's anxiety and enjoyment in online speaking skills courses in English language teacher education, aiming to address issues and provide solutions for a positive online classroom environment. The research fills a gap by exploring correlations between FLE and FLSA specifically in fully online speaking courses, a topic not extensively covered before. Despite limitations such as focusing only on freshmen and using only Likert scales, the study offers valuable pedagogical insights. It contributes to understanding the emotional dynamics of online foreign language teaching, particularly relevant in the context of the widespread use of online courses.

As the first research question revealed, freshmen in pre-service English language teacher education programs were found to be highly enjoyed according to FLES scores, in accordance with the FLSAS scores, freshmen were found moderately anxious, as well. The findings were similar to the first work's results comparing the extent of overlap between FLE and FLCA conducted by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) on an international sample. The results were also in line with tother related studies (Deweale & Deweale,2017; Dewey et al., 2018; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Dewaele et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2021; Özer & Altay, 2021) though the findings showed contradiction to the work of Su (2022) who performed a study on Chinese undergraduate students; this may result from the online nature of the present study. Accordingly, the consistency with various age groups, international samples, and diverse educational settings adds robustness to the findings. Notably, the contradiction with Su (2022) underscores the influence of contextual factors, potentially attributed to the online nature of the present study. This emphasizes that educators and researchers should recognize the influence of learning environments, online or traditional, on interpreting emotional experiences. Understanding the impact on language learners' enjoyment and anxiety levels requires acknowledging variations in educational modalities

When we turned our faces to the results of the second research question, it was concluded that there existed a negative correlation between FLE and FLSA. When the related literature observed, this finding is in agreement with Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014), Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2019), Liu and Wang's (2021), Dewaele et al.'s (2016), Dewaele and Alfawzan's (2018), and Bensalem's (2021) findings. However, the current study's findings do not support Dewaele et al. (2019) study showing a weakly positive correlation between FLE and FLA. Although these results differed from some published studies (e.g., Dewaele and Dewaele, 2017; Dewey et al., 2018) which highlighted that there is a dynamic relationship between FLE and FLA, and some other works (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Boudreau et al., 2018) which confirmed that FLE and FLA are independent constructs. The discrepancies with studies emphasizing a dynamic relationship or the independence of FLE and FLA highlight the nuanced nature of emotional experiences in language learning. Accordingly, as researchers, we suggest that the nuanced nature of emotional experiences in language learning warrants further exploration. Therefore, educators and researchers should consider these variations when designing interventions and acknowledge the complexity of the interplay between FLE and FLSA in different educational contexts and participant groups.

Pursuant to the third research question, the gender effect is revealed. According to the findings, female freshmen's FLSA levels were found higher compared to male participants. The overall findings corroborate the findings of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), Dewaele et al. (2016), and Su (2022), who suggested that female participants show more FLA compared to males. This may arise from the fact that females are more concerned about their mistakes, and they feel more nervous and less confident compared to males along with their tendency toward showing physical symptoms of FLA as confirmed by Dewaele et al. (2016), as well. In contrast to earlier findings, Dewaele et al.'s (2019) study has no evidence of the fact that male participants' FLCA is not higher compared to females. However, the findings of the current study do not support Bensalem's (2021), and Özer and Altay's (2021) studies that determined no gender differences between FLE and FLA. That may spring from the fact that participants' age groups and education levels show differences. To this end, it may seem predictable to reach different results. Consequently, it can be suggested that lecturers should not ignore gender differences in their classes in the course of speaking classes. They also should use more encouraging strategies for the female freshmen. Furthermore, lecturers should tolerantly cover the mistakes to make freshmen feel comfortable while speaking.

It is determined through the fourth research question that the observed disparity in FLE levels, with the Aegean Region exhibiting the highest and Southern Anatolia the lowest, may be attributed to differences in educational and recreational resources. Cultural interest and social factors, as highlighted by Pan and Zhang (2021) and Dewaele and Dewaele (2020), emerge as influential elements shaping FLE. The stringent cultural norms prevalent in Southern Anatolia potentially contribute to the diminished FLE levels reported. Drawing parallels, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) identify global variations, with Asia showcasing lower FLE levels, emphasizing the role of cultural norms. The Aegean Region's heightened FLE is linked to its advanced educational infrastructure and a cosmopolitan social setting that fosters positive language learning experiences. Conversely, Central Anatolia records the highest FLSA levels, a phenomenon attributed to the presence of prestigious universities that exert academic pressure on students. The Aegean Region, geographically proximate to the West, exhibits lower FLSA levels, aligning with Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) cross-cultural findings. The Aegean Region's distinctive geographical and cultural attributes contribute to a more favorable environment, leading to diminished anxiety and heightened enjoyment compared to other regions surveyed in the study. This multifaceted analysis suggests that regional variations in educational infrastructure, cultural norms, and social environments significantly influence the emotional experiences of students in foreign language learning contexts. Recognizing the influence of cultural interest and social factors on FLE, educators should consider tailoring language learning approaches to accommodate diverse regional contexts. Addressing the stringent cultural norms in regions with diminished FLE levels, such as Southern Anatolia, becomes crucial for creating a more conducive learning environment. Additionally, the positive correlation between advanced educational infrastructure and heightened FLE in the Aegean Region suggests that investments in educational resources may positively impact students' emotional experiences. Language educators should adapt strategies to mitigate FLSA in regions like Central Anatolia, where academic pressures are prominent. Overall, these findings emphasize the need for region-specific interventions and support systems to enhance the overall language learning experience and emotional well-being of students in diverse geographical and cultural contexts.

The importance of being plurilingual is revealed one more time through the results of the fifth research question of the present study, which showed that freshmen with more than two languages have more enjoyment than their peers with one or two languages. The finding that the FLE level of those who speak three or more languages is the highest, whereas the FLSA level is the highest in those who speak one language may stem from cognitive ease of speaking more than one language and having a feeling of achievement and confidence to this end. However, the reason for the finding that there is no significant correlation between the participants speaking one language and two languages may be associated with a misunderstanding of the native language as speaking one language. The findings of the current study also support the previous research conducted by Dewaele and MacInyre (2014), who reached directly the same results. Therefore, it may seem safe to suggest that fostering plurilingualism among language learners can contribute significantly to enhancing foreign language enjoyment. Implementing plurilingual approaches in language education may thus contribute to creating a more enriching and enjoyable language learning experience for students.

Regarding the present research results in pursuance of the sixth research question, on a shared basis, the freshmen's FLE and FLSA levels exhibit a robust correlation with their self-perceived proficiency; individuals perceiving excellent proficiency show elevated FLE scores, while those with extremely poor perceived proficiency demonstrate higher FLSA scores. The overall results seem to be in rapport with the earlier research into the relationship between the level of mastery and FLE and FLA levels. In this sense, the findings of the current study corroborate the findings of Dewaele et al. (2018), Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018), Li and Xu (2019), Bensalem (2021), Özer and Altay (2021), Botes et al. (2021). However, it contradicts the findings of Su (2022) who found no correlation between the level of mastery and FLE and FLA levels. It is seen that aligning these findings with prior research highlights the consistency of the relationship between proficiency levels and emotional aspects of language learning. The contradiction with Su (2022) suggests that the nuanced interplay between language proficiency and emotional states may vary across different contexts the freshmen are required to have higher perceived proficiency levels. Moreover, according to Uztosun (2017), pre-service English language teachers do not feel satisfied with their perceived level of English, especially when

they are required to speak, as well. In this case, freshmen's perceived levels are required to be increased by activities that support the I +1 theory of Krashen (1985) to make freshmen confident about their perceived level of English proficiency. For this reason, courses should be designed and revised to enhance freshmen's speaking competence. Instruction should be supported by well-designed course content and functional interaction between lecturers and freshmen.

The effect of classroom preference is determined through the last research question which reveals that freshmen with online speaking skills classes preference have a higher FLSA compared to those with face-to-face online speaking skills classes preference. The preference for online speaking skills classes among participants, as opposed to face-to-face classes, may be linked to the face-saving nature of online education, providing a sense of comfort and relaxation as individuals feel concealed behind screens. This aligns with Salcado's (2010) research, indicating that being behind screens reduces anxiety and enhances the foreign language learning process. The inclination to hide when faced with challenges, and avoiding mistakes during communicative activities, contributes to the comfort felt behind screens. Consequently, a significant association between FLSA and the preference for online courses emerges among freshmen. Additionally, participants with higher FLE may favor online courses due to their advanced communicative skills, personal traits, and self-confidence. The significant association between FLSA and the preference for online courses underscores the need for educators to recognize the role of the online environment in shaping students' emotional experiences and implement strategies to address anxiety in both online and face-to-face language learning settings.

The implications for the present research seem to have far-reaching effects since it addresses heretofore unknown issues covering technology, interaction, and emotions in the FL learning environment, which will also become more important as the 21st century progresses. Moreover, course designs, curriculum, and English language teacher education programs should be improved from the perspective of positive psychology. The sustainability of them should be a concern of stakeholders, including lecturers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and even policymakers considering freshmen's needs and expectations.

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