



The Emotional Dynamics of Online EFL Speaking Classes: A Qualitative Study on the Predictors of Anxiety and Enjoyment

Çevrimiçi Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Konuşma Derslerinin Duygusal Dinamikleri: Kaygı ve Keyif Almanın Belirleyicileri Üzerine Nitel bir Çalışma

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THE EMOTIONAL DYNAMICS OF ONLINE EFL SPEAKING CLASSES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE PREDICTORS OF ANXIETY AND ENJOYMENT

ABSTRACT

Recent research has shown that learners' foreign language anxiety (FLA) and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) are mutually present in foreign language classes. This qualitative study investigated learners' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) FLA and FLE through learning experience episodes to determine only FLA-related factors and only FLE-related factors as well as the mutual factors that affect both FLA and FLE in online speaking classes. Thematic analyses were conducted to reveal FLA and FLE predicting factors separately under the categories of teacher-related factors, student-related factors, and course-related factors. In line with the investigation of the mutual factors that affect both FLA and FLE, it has been suggested that topic selection, teachers' manners, course design, technological infrastructure, and students' readiness for the class were found to be possible FLA and FLE predictors present in online speaking skills classes. Implications of the findings are provided for EFL teaching at the tertiary level.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety, Foreign Language Enjoyment, Online Speaking Class.



ÇEVİRİMİÇİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE KONUŞMA DERSLERİNİN DUYGUSAL DİNAMİKLERİ: KAYGI VE KEYİF ALMANIN BELİRLEYİCİLERİ ÜZERİNE NİTEL BİR ÇALIŞMA

ÖZ

Son zamanlarda yapılan araştırmalar, yabancı dil sınıflarında öğrencilerin yabancı dil kaygısı (YDK) ve yabancı dilden keyif alma (YDKA) durumlarının karşılıklı olarak mevcut olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu nitel çalışmada, çevrimiçi konuşma sınıflarında yalnızca YDK ile ilgili faktörleri ve yalnızca YDKA ile ilgili faktörleri ve hem YDK hem de YDKA'yı etkileyen ortak faktörleri belirlemek için öğrenme deneyimleri araştırılmıştır. YDK ve YDKA'yı yordayan faktörleri öğretmenle ilgili faktörler, öğrenciyle ilgili faktörler ve dersle ilgili faktörler kategorileri altında ayrı ayrı ortaya çıkarmak için tematik analizler yapılmıştır. Hem YDK hem de YDKA'yı etkileyen ortak faktörlerin araştırılması doğrultusunda, konu seçiminin, öğretmen tutumunun, ders tasarımının, teknolojik altyapının ve öğrencilerin derse hazır bulunuşluklarının çevrimiçi konuşma becerileri sınıflarında mevcut olası YDK ve

YDKA yordayıcıları olduğu öne sürülmüştür. Bulguların yükseköğretim düzeyinde İngilizce öğretimi üzerine yansımaları sunulmuştur

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yabancı Dil Kaygısı, Yabancı Dilde Keyif Alma, Çevrimiçi Konuşma Sınıfları.



INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on emotional differences while learning a foreign language date back a long time; however, with the abrupt shift in classroom environments from traditional to online due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, researching affective factors in the post-covid online foreign language classes has become more of an issue in order to meet the challenges arising from the unexpected shift.

English language teaching programs were no exception from the challenges encountered in the wake of shifting to post-covid online education. Therefore, both academicians and students were called to reposition themselves in those online classes. New roles were cast on behalf of stakeholders for the new education environment; consequently, researching individual differences, as inextricable elements of foreign language classes, became a prerequisite for sustaining a quality online foreign language education. However, foreign language learning is not processed in cognitional vacuums; therefore, researching the emotional states of the students promotes effective foreign language learning, seeing that effective foreign language learning is a compelling synthesis of both cognition and emotion (Oxford, 2017).

Emotions have significant impacts on the language learning processes (De-waele, Albakistani & Ahmed, 2022). Accordingly, as fundamental human motives, they play crucial roles in prompting certain learning behaviors (MacIntyre, 2002); however, foreign language learning (FLL)/ second language acquisition (SLA) literature concentrates on cognitive perspective either implicitly or explicitly (Zare, Karimpour & Delavar, 2022). Since cognition and emotion are regarded as complementary elements in the foreign language learning process (Oxford, 2017), of course, there is room for emotion studies in the related literature. All the same, when it comes to research into foreign language students' emotional states, a considerable amount of literature has been published on negative emotions, in particular, foreign language (classroom) anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986), which is known for its multidimensional negative impacts on foreign language learning process along with communication in a foreign language. To date, positive emotions have received scant attention in the research literature compared to negative emotions. With the recent recognition of the value of positive emotion studies in the literature dragged by the wave of positive psychology (Seligman

& Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), foreign language enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), which refers to a positive emotion that helps learners to overcome negative emotion arousal by promoting resiliency in the process of language learning (Durmus, 2022), is found as the most frequent topic encountered while tracing the related literature on positive psychology in foreign language education. Bearing in mind that FLE is a crucial aspect of the foreign language learning process on the strength of its contributions to achievement, it might be appropriate to suggest that handling both positive and negative emotional factors emergent in the foreign language learning process promotes the quality of education rather than concentrating on one of them (Shao et al., 2019). This is especially relevant because FLA and FLE are the most commonly experienced emotions encountered in FL classes (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

Although there are a good number of studies exploring both FLA and FLE in the same research context, a few of them specifically focus on the effect of speaking skills or being in an online environment on FLA and FLE.

Speaking Skills, Foreign Language Anxiety, and Foreign Language Enjoyment

To begin with the previous literature that touches upon speaking skills, the research conducted by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) was the first to study the relationship between FLE and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), adopting a mixed method design. Participants were recruited from around the world, with 1746 total participants and 1076 included in the qualitative portion of the study. The study found that group work, debates, and activities involving humor, positive attitudes from teachers, and well-organized courses were seen as FLE booster activities. Speaking in front of a community was noted as both an enjoyable and anxiety-provoking activity.

Dewaele et al. (2016) performed a follow-up study to examine gender differences by analyzing the same data set (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) at the item level. The results revealed that female participants reported higher levels of FLE and FLCA, felt more pride in their success, had more fun in FL classes, and were less likely to feel bored compared to male participants. However, female participants also reported higher levels of anxiety about making mistakes and more worries about their speaking skills. The study found no significant differences in the ability to express oneself in the target language or being a worthy member of the language learning community between female and male participants. It also found that learners with emotional intensity tend to experience both positive and negative emotions in the FL classroom.

Boudreau et al. (2018) conducted a study in Canada to investigate the dynamic relationship between for FLE and FLCA on a second-by-second basis using an

idiodynamic approach. They recruited 10 higher education students who were English-speaking Anglo-Canadians learning French as a second language. The participants were asked to perform a speaking task in the target language while being video recorded. The task consisted of two phases: describing a photograph that they found enjoyable and answering five interview-like questions orally. The study used software to measure fluctuations in the levels of FLE and FLCA, and participants were asked to rate their feelings while watching the recorded video of their completed tasks. The researcher and the participants then discussed the rises and drops in ratings to understand the causes of the fluctuations in a subsequent interview. The data confirmed that there is a dynamic correlation between FLE and FLCA. The subsequent interviews suggested that the reasons behind the fluctuations may be due to difficulty in finding the most suitable word during the oral tasks or being interested/disinterested in discussing certain aspects of the task.

Language learning environment, Foreign Language Anxiety, and Foreign Language Enjoyment

The role of the language learning environment, either face-to-face or online, has become one of the concerns considering its impact on FLA and FLE in foreign language learning classes. Collecting data from 510 college EFL students in the European context, Resnik and Dewaele (2021) revealed that students in face-to-face classes experience both more FLE and FLCA compared to the participants in online classes. Furthermore, participants from online classes reported that their FLE level is low because of a lack of laughter and the shallow relationship between peers and teachers, while the lower level of FLCA was linked to the perceived anonymity of online classes and the possibility of avoiding interaction by hiding behind the screen.

As a post-pandemic study, Maican and Cocoradă (2021) conducted a mixed-method study of 207 Romanian university students' FLE and FLCA during the pandemic and found that although the participants complained about the increased demands and physical separation from peers and instructors in online classes, it is also reported that they developed effective coping behaviors in online classes, leading to higher FLE. Additionally, the study revealed that lower-achieving students had higher FLE in the online environment.

In their mixed-method study, Dewaele, Albakistani and Ahmed (2022) examined the levels of FLE, FLCA, and foreign language boredom (FLB) among 168 EFL learners in both face-to-face and online (emergency remote teaching) classes. The statistical analyses showed that the learners experienced significantly more FLE, more FLCA, and less FLB in face-to-face classes than in online classes. The qualitative data provided a more detailed understanding of what the learners appreciated and disliked in both contexts. Many learners reported feeling more isolated,

disengaged, distracted, and missing interactions with peers and teachers while attending online classes. However, some participants felt that the online environment allowed for relationship-building and reduced their fear of making errors and pushed them to develop new coping strategies. The main sources of FLCA in online classes were issues with an internet connection rather than the anxiety of making errors in front of others.

Taking together both speaking skills and online environment effects on FLE and FLA, in their research, Durmuş and Kızıltan (2025) used quantitative methods to examine the FLE and foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) of freshman students in online speaking courses. The study was conducted in response to the added stress on speaking courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sample group consisted of 722 participants from English Language Teacher Education Programs. The study revealed a significant correlation between students' FLE and FLSA and the preferred classroom environment for speaking courses. It was put forward that participants with online speaking classes preference have higher FLA while those who prefer face-to-face classes have higher FLE. In other words, the communicative nature of speaking courses may cause discomfort for freshman students in face-to-face settings, which may explain why those with higher anxiety levels prefer online speaking courses. It was also suggested that offering speaking courses online might improve FLE levels for freshman students compared to face-to-face classes.

The literature review demonstrated that speaking skills, alongside the language learning environment, are among the most significant predictors of FLE and FLA. While there has been research on FLE and FLA, they mainly adopted quantitative and mixed-method research designs; therefore, there remains a gap in the literature concerning FLA and FLE in a speaking course context adopting qualitative research in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of participants' FLA and FLE experiences and to reveal determiners of the experiences.

The 'silver lining' of the Covid-19 pandemic is that it opens the doors for researchers to flourish previous literature on the effect of online instructions on learners' emotions (Dewaele, Albakistani & Ahmed, 2022). The present study is designed to investigate freshman students' FLA and FLE experiences in online speaking classes. The rationale behind choosing speaking classes as a sampling environment is that as Arnold (1999) put forward that speaking skill stimulates anxiety more than other language skills; therefore, it is more observable in speaking classes. Moreover, Marchand and Gutierrez (2012) revealed that the emotional experiences of the students in online classes and students in traditional classes show differences. The present study aims to figure out the possible factors affecting FLA and FLE experienced by the students in online speaking courses, analyzing their self-reports which consist of both their online FL speaking class positive and negative

experiences and emotion awareness-based suggestions considering the following research questions:

1. What might be the possible FLA-provoking factors emerging in online speaking classes?
2. What might be the possible FLE-promoting factors emerging in online speaking classes?
3. What might be the possible factors affecting both FLA and FLE in online speaking classes regarding the classroom reflections of the participants?

METHOD

Research Design

The research is among a limited number to provide a further perception of the field by presenting qualitative data that helps researchers to scrutinize a more comprehensive representation of participants' FLE and FLSA experiences compared to the quantitative approach. Since qualitative research is portrayed as an approach for investigating the significance assigned to a problem by the participants (Creswell & Cresswell, 2017), utilizing the qualitative approach is beneficial considering that it provides a detailed account that helps to understand the intricate aspects of the research topic.

As a literary form of qualitative research, the narrative research design is employed to provide a detailed discovery of the meanings participants attributed to their experiences (Salkind, 2010). A major advantage of narrative research design is that storied experiences are emphasized to obtain rich data and provide multiple interpretations instead of aiming to reach a single truth.

Participants

Participants are twenty freshman students (4 males, 16 females) from three online speaking classes taught by one instructor (male) at a university in Samsun, Türkiye since having a research sample from a single school context might help researchers to control specific variables. All participants were 1st year students enrolled in English Language Teaching programs. They took online speaking classes for 3 hours per week. A total of twenty participants were recruited through a convenience sampling method, which is a type of nonprobability sampling, for the research, since the method is based on a sample that is readily available and easy to access. The eligibility criteria were that participants were required to take online speaking classes while completing the insight forms.

Instruments

The data obtained through an online insight form consists of two open-ended questions. Two open-ended questions were extracted from Jiang and Dewaele's (2019) research instruments and adopted as follows: (1) "Please describe one of the most enjoyable learning experiences in your Online Speaking class and how you felt about it." and (2) "Please describe one of the most anxious learning experiences in your Online Speaking class and how you felt about it."

Data Collection and Analysis

Subsequent to obtaining the Human Research Ethics Committee's approval, the data was gathered via online insight forms, which aimed to gather the views and experiences of the participants to gain a deeper understanding of the constructs being studied in this research. The insight form, designed by the researchers considering expert opinions, was posted online at the end of the spring term using Google Docs via notice boards of the online speaking classes and remained accessible for two months. Since volunteer participants' responses are of better quality (Wilson & Dewaele, 2010), all the participants were recruited on a voluntary basis.

The qualitative data of insight forms were analyzed using MAXQDA22 plus software. First, the data were coded by the author adopting a data-driven coding approach (Gibbs, 2007), which is based on building the codes that act on the data. In order to maximize trustworthiness, not only were multiple coding rounds were conducted to sustain intra-coder reliability (Revesz, 2012), but also another researcher was recruited to reach inter-coder reliability. Bottom-up coding was adopted independently to avoid any preconceived notions of what the codes might offer. In the present study, descriptive content analysis was employed to systematically analyze the textual data collected from interviews with participants. The process commenced with the collection of interview transcripts, which were then meticulously transcribed to ensure accuracy. Following transcription, the data were segmented into coherent units, ranging from individual words to entire paragraphs, facilitating a granular examination of the content. Subsequently, a coding scheme was developed based on the explicit characteristics and themes observed within the data, allowing for systematic categorization. Each segment was then coded according to its content, adhering to the predefined descriptive coding scheme. Following coding, the frequency of each code or category was tabulated, providing a quantitative overview of the content distribution. Finally, the findings were interpreted considering the research objectives, revealing prevalent themes and patterns inherent in the participants' narratives (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

Ethics Committee Approval (There is no requirement for Ethics Committee Approval for review articles)

Ethics committee approval was received for this study from Ondokuz Mayıs University

The Title of The Ethics Committee: Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive

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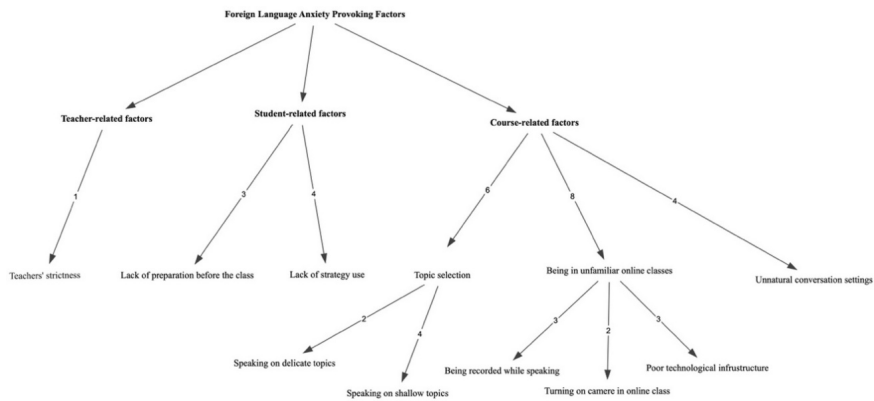
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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were presented in line with the research questions. The data analysis and discussion have been proposed by furnishing direct quotations frequently and references to the literature. Codes of the first two questions were extracted from participants' narratives on their online speaking class experiences while the last one was comprised of participants' insights about the emotions existing in online speaking class.

Research Question 1: What might be the possible FLA-provoking factors emerging in online speaking classes?

Figure 1. Single case model (code hierarchy) of foreign language anxiety-provoking factors



As can be seen in Figure 1, a total of six main foreign language anxiety-provoking factors were revealed regarding teacher-related, student-related, and course-related categories. Under teacher-related factors, it was found that teachers' stri-

ctness predicts FLA. In her classroom experience, participant 15 stated as follows: “...you are not strict to us at all and we can communicate with you without worrying about making mistakes.” “Besides all these factors, I think the most important factor that creates both enjoyable and anxious learning is the attitude of the teacher.” (Participant 11). These findings confirm Pan and Zhang’s (2021) study findings, which reveal students’ perceptions about teachers predicting FLE and FLA in the FL classes.

As for student-related factors, the analysis showed that lack of preparation before the class and lack of strategy use make students feel anxious in the process of learning. It was indicated in the participants learning experience episodes as follows: “Before I join to every lesson, I feel anxious, I feel like I wouldn’t be able to speak and I would forget everything that I knew.” (Participant 6) while for the other student-related factor it was put forward “I feel a little worried because I am unprepared for the topic before the lesson starts.” (Participant 15). Furthermore, participant 14 stated “I prepared notes to use during my speech, but after a while I forgot to look at them and started to speak freely. When this happened, I was anxious to lose control and speak about other things.”

Interpreting all the direct quotations, it can be deduced that students feel FLA when they are not ready for the speaking class. It might stem from the fact that they are not that good at using language learning strategies. The study’s findings supported Guo, Xu, and Liu’s (2018) research, which suggested that Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) levels significantly impacted students’ strategy use. This aligns with Boudreau, MacIntyre, and Dewaele’s (2018) study, which proposed that language learners might experience difficulty in selecting the most suitable words during oral tasks.

Regarding course-related factors, we encounter topic selection, being in unfamiliar online classes, and unnatural conversation settings as FLA predictors in online speaking classes. Exploring the topic selection, speaking on delicate topics and shallow topics, the classroom was determined as anxiety-provoking element in the class. In accordance with participants’ responses, it was stated as follows considering delicate topics: “...our topic was “friendship,” and I talked about an awful experience I had in my past. Our teacher was kind, of course, and he gave advice about friendships, but talking about that kind of ‘friends’ and experiences always makes me anxious, so I was a little bit nervous and anxious.” (Participant 1) and moreover, another participant stated “Another reason that I sometimes get anxious is the topics. Sometimes I feel like I am not educated enough for that topic. I don’t want to say anything wrong or offensive.” (Participant 18). Another participant expressed her idea about shallow topics indicating that repetitive topics make them bored and anxious because they cannot find ideas to contribute to the flow of the class “The questions related to the topic were also quite interesting and made us think. One

point to consider is that the topics were sometimes too brief, resulting in everyone repeating the facts over and over again.” (Participant 3). The results reflect those of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), who also found that adopting repetitive topics is an FLE-decreasing factor in classroom settings. Since it was suggested to be a negative correlation between FLA and FLE (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Liu & Wang, 2021), when FLE decreases, FLA level may show an increase.

Concerning other course-related factors under the category of being in unfamiliar online classes, participant 4 highlighted the new environment impact “When I first attended the lessons, I had a lot of worries and concerns in terms of both the environment...In general, it was a tense experience for me as I got excited quickly.” and participant 8 also put forward “Since we were not in the face-to-face classroom environment and we did not see other students, I sometimes felt anxious a lot. Although it was a speaking class, I sometimes felt like there was a lack of communication with classmates and my teacher as we were not in a physical classroom, and I can say that it was a limitation for us and it caused a lot of stress.”. It may be due to a lack of experience in an online foreign language learning environment before taking the present speaking course, as also indicated by Anderson and Williams (2011); learners may show hesitation and therefore feel anxious about being active on online platforms because of a lack of experience in an online learning environment. These results are consistent with Chametzky’s (2013) research which helps to list possible sources of anxiety, including online education environment experiences and the complexity of online education. However, being recorded while speaking was perceived as another anxiety-provoking factor in accordance with participants’ statements: “I think one of the factors is the lesson being recorded. I think it is really beneficial because sometimes you can’t join and you can later listen to the recording of the lesson. For example, I learned the topics from the recording of the lessons. But because it is recorded, I think that mistakes and my embarrassing experiences are gonna be there forever.” (Participant 18), and participant 14 also expressed the restrictions that recording brought into FL speaking classes as follows: “I think the fact that the lessons are recorded creates anxiety. Not only because we cannot speak perfect English. I think that some fear saying things that can create a conflict with teachers or with authority.”.

Turning on camera as an anxiety-increasing factor appeared in participants’ anxious learning experience episodes: “I think the only factor that creates the anxiety is turning on the camera. Because the students in this class are strange to me like unknown. I don’t know them” (Participant 19). The study’s findings confirmed Durmuş and Kızıltan’s (2022) results, which identified sharing the comfort zone via webcams as an anxiety-provoking factor in online FL classes. They also aligned with Kozar’s (2015) findings on teacher and student attitudes toward webcam use, though they contradict Jauregi et al.’s (2012) research that reported a motivating effect of webcams in online FL learning.

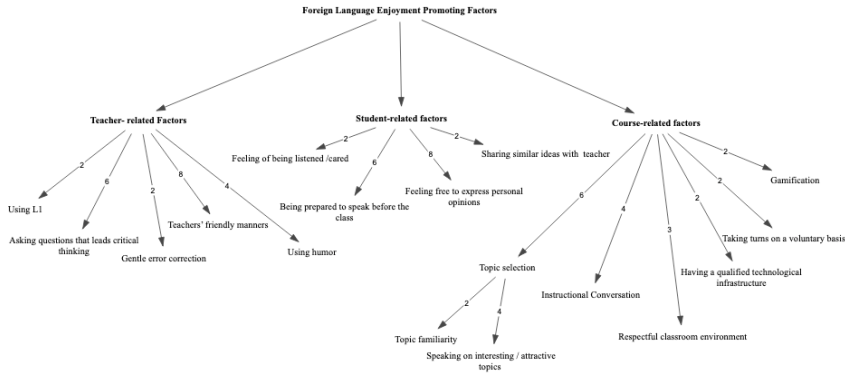
We encountered the anxiety-provoking effect of poor technological infrastructure during speaking classes in the learning experience of Participant 11 as follows: *“Especially in online classes, poor internet connection may lead to anxious learning because the inability of the students to completely understand the teacher can cause tension on both sides. Another factor that creates anxious learning may be the lack of a suitable work environment. This also may cause a loss of communication between teachers and students.”* Another participant expressed the combination of lack of preparation and poor internet connection as an anxiety-provoking element: *“When I am not ready for the lesson or my information about the topic and my internet connection is not normal, I feel anxious.”* (Participant 11) These findings align with Durmuş and Kızıltan’s (2022) research on preservice EFL teachers’ online learning anxiety. Furthermore, they are compatible with the findings of Dewaele, Albakistani, and Ahmed’s (2022) study, which suggested that internet connection issues are one of the main sources of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA).

Lastly, the anxiety-provoking nature of unnatural conversation settings was described by Participant 5 as *“I feel like I’m in the exam every time.”*, while another participant commented on the situation as follows: *“The only rule I would like to be different is that we should speak as in a conversation with each other instead of preparing a speech. I am sure there are reasons why our teacher chose this way, but it makes us nervous while waiting for our turn to speak. Maybe we could also read some articles about the topics together and discuss the main arguments.”* (Participant 14) and *“First factor for me, you cannot communicate with others in the natural places. I cannot even feel even if they don’t like me. Just with the editing something in our minds, we are attending our lives. to prove yourself or take some feedback, communication should have a two-way street.”* (Participant 9) Accordingly, it can be concluded that learners desire to be in conversation with the ones in the classroom rather than preparing a speech or presenting a subject to them in online speaking classes in order not to feel the social isolation that is brought by the separation of the classroom presence during online classes. The findings seem to confirm Zhang and Rahimi’s (2014) study that implies the anxiety-provoking effect of the lack of communication between academics and learners.

Research Question 2: What might be the possible FLE-promoting factors emerging in online speaking classes?

The second research question aimed to identify the factors that impact FLE in online speaking classes. Scrutinizing the data, we encountered more FLE-promoting factors than expected to be present in online speaking classes compared to FLA-provoking factors. As the second research question revealed, a total of sixteen factors affect FLE in online speaking skills classes, as presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Single case model (code hierarchy) of foreign language enjoyment promoting factors



To start with the teacher-related factors, using L1 is found to be one of the enjoyment-increasing factors due to the fact that Bruen and Kelly (2017) stated that the use of L1 can facilitate a reduction in learner anxiety, consequently, learners' enjoyment is expected to increase. Accordingly, Participant 2 penned an enjoyable learning experience episode of an online speaking course in the following: "My teacher said my camera was horizontal, but I didn't understand the word. I asked to begin my speech anyway, but he realized my confusion and explained in Turkish. I felt embarrassed and quickly fixed my camera. Despite feeling ashamed, I started speaking calmly because I know it's not a shame to not know, but to not learn—I'll never forget what 'horizontal' means now."

In her enjoyable experience, participant 6 stated, "Actually, I find every lesson of English speaking skills enjoyable but I generally feel anxious because of knowing that some people listen to me during my speech but after my speech, my teacher asks me some questions, then I feel more relaxed because it feels like he tries to make me think in a more detailed way on the topic," and participant 8 stated as follows: "... I can say that when our teacher asked me some questions related to the topic and encouraged me to talk, I didn't feel anxious and enjoyed talking a lot," indicating the importance of teachers asking reflective questions as an enjoyment-promoting factor in speaking classes. A similar response was obtained from a participant in Dewaele et al.'s (2016) research, which was evaluated as an ambiguous experience of anxiety and enjoyment; however, in the present research, the participant's statement was placed under the title of an enjoyable learning experience episode.

The way of error correction might be seen as a reflection of teachers' attitudes towards students, which were determined as a main predictor of FLE in FL classes in the study of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019), who proposed that teacher-cen-

tered variables mostly predicted FLE. It is therefore, it was an expected finding that gentle error correction is a FLE creating factor in the perspectives of students. Participant 18 highlighted the importance of teachers' attitudes in her enjoyable learning experience episode as follows: *"One factor that creates enjoyment is when the teacher asks questions or shares opinions during your speech. It creates dialogue and makes me feel listened to and understood, even though my English isn't great for unprepared questions. Listening to other students interact with the teacher is also nice. Another factor is the teacher's attitude toward our mistakes."* Similarly, participant 15 stated, *"When we make mistakes, you correct us gently, which I believe is one of the most important traits of a teacher... to be honest, this makes me feel a bit relaxed."*

Scrutinizing FLE-related factors, under the heading of teacher-related factors, teachers' friendly manners were established as another FLE-promoting factor. Participant 16 emphasized the effect of teachers' being understanding on her FLE *"I do not see any reasons to create anxiety during our lessons since you are an understanding teacher. But for the enjoyment parts, I can definitely say something related to it. First of all, it is thanks to you I have very positive feelings toward your class. You are an understanding teacher as I said before. I know I can ask for your help when I have trouble with my lessons (and I really appreciate that)"*. Teachers' sharing of personal experiences is seen as a sign of friendliness in the comments of participant 14 *"Maybe the teacher can share experiences or memories related to the topic. This can encourage the students to share theirs too."* These findings accord with Li's (2022) research findings which pointed out that teacher friendliness is a predictor of FLE.

Using humor was an expected finding because in accordance with the previous literature, there is a strong relationship between using humor and FLE. The recent research on FLE is inclined to investigate adopting humor in classes because as Dewaele et al. (2018) stated, humor can feed learners with benefits, including facilitation of class atmosphere. In their recent longitudinal study, Dewaele, Saito, and Halimi (2022) found that learners whose teachers do not joke frequently reported a drop in FLE within a semester. The investigation of Neff and Dewaele (2022), who examined the use of various humor strategies in a language class, revealed that spontaneous humor is one of the best working strategies in FL classes in the category of verbal humor. In line with the previous studies, participant 2's experience can be seen as evidence of the impact of using humor on FLE *"One time in class, our topic was "superstitions" and we were talking about the weird beliefs in Turkish culture such as breaking a mirror, the black cat and the evil eye charm and I said "when you break a mirror, nothing happens. Bad karma or luck do not follow you for the rest of your life." our teacher said while laughing. "of course, just your mother will be mad at you if you break a mirror!" it really made me laugh, and I enjoyed talking about it."* Furthermore, the feeling of being listened/cared for was observed as FLE promoting factor, along with using humor in the enjoyable learning experience

episode of participant 8 *“I don’t think I can give a specific example, but I can say that I really enjoyed my online speaking skills class when our teacher listened to us carefully and made some jokes to encourage us to talk.”*

Student-related factors are a significant piece of FLE cake. The feeling of being listened/ cared for was found worth investigating concerning the humanistic weight of FLE. Students feel worthy members of the FL learning community and this engagement may be a reason for promoting their FLE. To conclude, it might be deduced that teachers’ immediacy is regarded as a factor that affects FLE, which also accords with Guo, Gao and Shen’s (2022) study, which positively correlated teacher immediacy with FLE. Tracing the grinds of this factor in the insights of the participants, participant 8 expressed her feelings as follows: *“...I can say that I really enjoyed my online speaking skills class when our teacher listened to us carefully...”*, and it was also stated listening to others in the classroom is also encountered as enjoyment promoting factor in the following statement of the participant 18 *“... teacher asking questions or giving his opinions between your speech. It creates a dialogue, and it is enjoyable even though my English isn’t that good in sudden unprepared questions. It makes me feel like my speech was listened to and understood. The same way listening to other students talk with the teacher during their speech is also nice...”*.

While lack of preparation before the class was an anxiety-provoking factor addressed under FLA-related factors, being prepared to speak before the class was found FLE-promoting factor, which supports the negative correlation between FLA and FLE which was revealed in previous studies (eg. Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2019; Liu & Wang, 2021, Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Bensalem, 2021). The enjoyment-promoting effect of being ready to speak before the class was put forward as follows: *“...preparing to the speech before the lesson creates enjoyment because I have the chance to think about it in detail, research and get information as well. So it makes me feel confident. Then I enjoy talking.”* (Participant 6) and *“When I was well prepared for the topic which was given us by our teacher, I enjoyed it a lot.”* (Participant 9).

Although some participants stated that they enjoy being in online classes, they did not mention any detailed learning experience episode of their enjoyable experience in the same vein they indicated that they enjoy feeling free to express personal opinions and being prepared for the speech before the class that was determined as student-related FLE promoting factors *“I enjoy every lesson of online English speaking skills class. On some topics, I really want to share my ideas with people. Everyone has their own ideas and that makes this lesson more interesting.”* (Participant 17). *“We made enjoyable lessons in line with the conditions and fulfilled the course content properly. I am happy that I can freely express my views on the subject without hesitation and boredom by being prepared and attending the classes.”*

(Participant 4). In line with the present research, in their recent paper, Guo, Gao, and Shen (2022) also indicated that learners' levels of stress decrease when they are given the opportunity to express their thoughts and emotion, and consequently, their FLE levels are expected to increase.

In addition to feeling free to express personal opinions, being aware of sharing similar ideas with teachers was also determined as enjoyment boosting factor emergent in online speaking classes. Participant 11 reported "*When the teacher asks me joyful questions or indicates that we have the same opinion, I enjoy it.*" Likewise, participant 5 indicated he feels comfortable when he knows teachers' opinions about the topic as follows: "*We relax a little when the teacher says his opinion...*". This may result from the need for closure, defined as a tendency to avoid ambiguity, a factor that was proposed by Rezazadeh and Zarrinabadi's (2020) investigation as a source of FLE.

Starting with topic selection, one of the course-related factors, two of the participants highlighted the effect of topic familiarity on their FLE as follows: "*...talking about a topic in which I am interested in my real life creates enjoyment because it doesn't sound unfamiliar to me.*" (Participant 6) and "*It can be enjoyable to speak English on any topic once you are used to speaking. Having knowledge about the subject and be interested in it make speaking enjoyable.*" (Participant 7), "*... when the topics are related to my interests such as art and music, I really enjoy classes more.*" (Participant 1). These findings support the work of Boudreau et al. (2018) linking being disinterested in the subject matter with FLA, and as a consequence, it may be inferred that being interested in the subject matter in a speaking class affects FLE. Accordingly, speaking on interesting/attractive topics was worth considering with respect to the participants' comments on the enjoyment-promoting consequences of speaking on interesting and attractive topics in online speaking class as follows: "*When the topic is interesting, current, or from a field that attracts students, then the lesson will be more enjoyable.*" (Participant 14) and participant 16 expressed her views as follows: "*I really enjoy our lessons in English Speaking Skills class. I think it's a great opportunity to speak English on different topics and improve ourselves. Every week we talk about very independent and different topics and usually, I have very different ideas about them. I feel great about it. It gives me a chance to express myself in detail about these different topics and I like it.*"

The enjoyment-promoting position of including instructional conversations in FL class can be observed in the enjoyable language learning experience episodes of participants as follows: "*The factors that create enjoyment are conversational lessons and sharing opinions and information with each other.*" (Participant 20) and participant 13 highlighted the effect of teacher talk in instructional conversations on her FLE: "*...and my teacher and I can talk more about that topic. So when my teacher and I talk more, I feel better so these experiences are enjoyable for me.*" The other

participants expressed their feelings about placing instructional conversation in FL settings as follows: “Another reason that I find your lesson enjoyable and fun is that I can somehow see my classmates hear their ideas, and somehow interact with them. The best part of our classes is when we are having a conversation with you.” (Participant 15) as well as the view of participant 16 “The class is a very healthy place for successful communication, and I think this creates enjoyment.” These findings are compatible with the previous research that revealed good communication skills of teachers and including debates as conversational activity in the organization of the course promotes FLE in FL classes (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

As suggested in Dewaele and MacIntyre’s (2016) investigation, the positive correlation between FLE and a pleasant classroom environment, which can also be specified as a respectful classroom environment, seemed to be appreciated by the present research participants inferred from their views: “I think the first factor is to listen to everyone with respect. It might create enjoyment. Because everybody deserves respect. It is also very important to respect everyone’s opinion. Nobody has to have the same ideas. So, I can think in a different way. And my friends, too.” (Participant 17) and “...I was impressed by both sides’ respect because it is difficult nowadays to express one’s opinion on a topic without causing conflict or misunderstanding. So I really appreciated the pleasant and respectful atmosphere. I think we will need to express our thoughts on something ...” (Participant 3).

Having a qualified technological infrastructure was found as an inseparable part of FLE in the comments of participants: “...enjoyable learning takes place thanks to a good internet connection and an efficient working environment.” (Participant 11). Dewaele, Albakistani and Ahmed’s (2022) study can be referred to support the present research findings in that internet connection is one of the main sources of FLA in online classes, therefore, it may be safe to conclude that if internet connection is not problematic, FLA of the students would not be triggered, and consequently, FLE might be expected to be promoted easier.

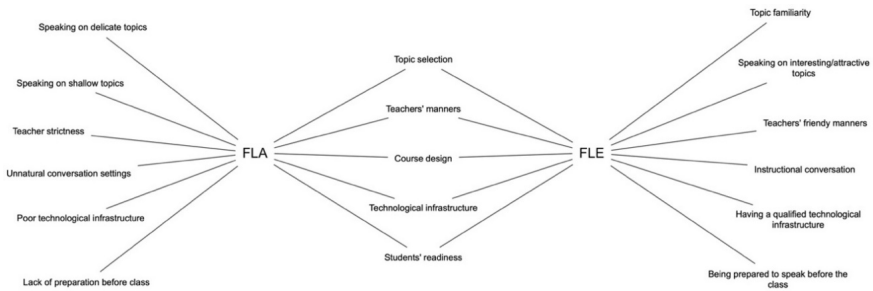
Taking turns on a voluntary basis is mainly about the relationship between willingness to communicate and FLE. In accordance with the experiences of the participants, it can be observed that participants feel more FLE when they attend a speaking activity voluntarily: “...one of the factors that creates enjoyment during online speaking skills class might be students’ speaking voluntarily and not feeling obliged. They may feel relieved, and the lesson may be more enjoyable.” (Participant 7) and “...being willing is another factor that creates enjoyment during speaking class.” (Participant 7). The study confirms the findings of Dewaele and Deweale’s (2018) as well as Dewaele and Pavelescu’s (2021) investigation of the relationship between FLE and willingness to communicate.

Lastly, adopting gamification into FL classes was found as FLE-promoting activity. Participant 7 stated “*Engaging in a conversation activity by playing a game with friends in class makes the class enjoyable.*”. This can support the findings of Dewaele and MacIntyre’s (2014) investigation, which proposed group works and debates promote FLE in FL classes.

Research Question 3: What might be the possible factors affecting both FLA and FLE in online speaking classes regarding the classroom reflections of the students?

The third research question addressed possible factors affecting both FLA and FLE by synthesizing the findings of the first two research questions. It can be clearly seen in Figure 3 that topic selection, teachers’ manners, course design, technological infrastructure, and students’ readiness were found as predictors of both FLA and FLE in online speaking classes. Themes created under the categories of FLA-provoking factors and FLE-promoting factors were presented with their distinctive features peculiar to the categories they belong to. It might be deduced that FLA and FLE are possibly predicted by two sides of the same variables in teacher-related, student-related, and course-related factors as stated in Durmuş and Kızıltan (2025). This finding also verified the results of Pan and Zhang’s (2021) investigation which suggests FLE and FLA can be predicted by the same factors, while one is predicted positively, the other is expected to be predicted negatively.

Figure 3. Two-cases model of foreign language anxiety and enjoyment-related factors



CONCLUSION

This qualitative study sets out to explore freshman students' FLA and FLE experiences in online speaking classes. Data was obtained through online insight forms. Participants were asked to describe the most enjoyable and the most anxious learning experiences in their online speaking class. Participants' responses were scrutinized, and FLA-provoking and FLE-promoting factors were determined, accordingly. All the determined factors were categorized under the themes of teacher-related factors, student-related factors, and course-related factors.

The investigation of FLA-provoking factors has shown that under the theme of teacher-related factors: teachers' strictness; student-related factors: lack of preparation before the class and lack of strategy use; course-related factors: topic selection (speaking on delicate topics/speaking on shallow topics), being in unfamiliar online classes (being recorded while speaking/turning on the camera in online classes/poor technological infrastructure), and unnatural conversation settings were found as reliable predictors of FLA in online speaking classes.

When attention is turned to FLE-promoting factors in online speaking classes, the present study seems to offer a detailed identification of FLE predictors. Teacher-related factors include using L1, asking questions that lead to critical thinking, gentle error correction, teachers' friendly manners, and using humor. Student-related factors were observed as feeling listened to and cared for, being prepared to speak before the class, feeling free to express personal opinions, and sharing similar ideas with the teacher. As for the course-related factors, they include topic selection (topic familiarity and speaking on interesting or attractive topics), instructional conversation, a respectful classroom environment, having a qualified technological infrastructure, taking turns on a voluntary basis, and gamification.

After a meticulous study of synthesizing the responses with respect to the first two research questions, factors that predict both FLA and FLE have been offered as follows: topic selection, teachers' manners, course design, technological infrastructure, and students' readiness. Taken together, these findings suggest that FLA and FLE can be predicted by the same factors as well as different factors emerging in online speaking classes. Correspondingly, the findings of this research are expected to provide insights for teachers to observe and manage FLA and FLE-related factors in online foreign language teaching settings while adding to the rapidly expanding field of FLE studies. Therefore, the present study has been one of the first attempts to thoroughly examine FLA and FLE predictors in an online FL learning setting through language learning episodes of the participants.

Implications for ELT

In accordance with the findings of the present study, teachers/instructors should take FLA and FLE- related factors while designing and managing their courses in order to promote FLE and decrease FLA in their online classes as a means to provide the most suitable and effective learning environment to language learners. Accordingly, the following suggestions can be offered:

- Teachers should be as flexible as possible in speaking classes.
- Teachers should use L1 when necessary.
- Teachers should ask prompting questions to sustain a conversation.
- Teachers should be careful and gentle about error correction.
- Teachers should behave friendly.
- Teachers should integrate humor into their foreign language classes.
- Teachers should ensure that students feel heard and valued.
- Teachers should provide a safe environment for students to express personal opinions.
- Teachers should sustain a respectful classroom environment.
- Teachers should have an acquiescent nature.
- Students should be ready for the course content before the class.
- Students should be knowledgeable about language learning strategies.
- Students should be informed about online classes before attending a new online environment.
- Students' willingness should be assured before asking them to turn on the webcam while being recorded.
- A collaborative curriculum should be adopted in order to select topics in accordance with students' interests.
- Natural conversation settings should be prepared by using authentic materials and adopting instructional conversations.
- Technological facilities should be promoted.
- Gamification should be a part of language teaching process rather than an extra activity.

However, the present study has potential limitations. The study was conducted on the participants who took the class from the same instructor and in the same context, which may have an effect on the generalizability of the findings. Notwithstanding the potential limitations, this work offers valuable insights into FLA and FLE predictors in online speaking classes. Moreover, further research may usefully explore the relationship between the demographic variables of the participants and

their FLA and FLE based on learners' learning experience episodes. Furthermore, a study similar to this one may be carried out in a traditional FL learning setting in order to reveal the differences in FLA and FLE predictors in accordance with the learning contexts, despite the fact that the findings of the present study have a number of important implications for teachers of online FL learning classes.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no personal or financial conflict of interest between the authors of the article within the scope of the study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Research Design: RİD(50%), EE(50%)

Data Collection: RİD(50%), EE(50%)

Statistical Analysis: RİD(50%), EE(50%)

Preparation of the Article: RİD(50%), EE(50%)

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