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*Research Paper*

## **Investigating Foreign Language Enjoyment and Public Speaking Class Anxiety in the EFL Class: A Mixed Methods Study**

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### **Abstract**

Foreign language enjoyment and speaking anxiety in the classroom are two potential emotion-inducing factors for foreign language learning. This sequential mixed methods study investigated whether and to what extent Iranian EFL students experienced foreign language enjoyment and public speaking anxiety in their English classrooms, and how they characterize the sources of the enjoyment and speaking anxiety in such a context. To these ends, 128 learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) from several English language institutes, selected based on convenience sampling, took part in this research. They completed Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014b) Foreign Language Enjoyment and Yaikhong and Usaha's (2012) Public Speaking Class Anxiety questionnaires, and write down about an episode in which they had experienced enjoyment and speaking anxiety in the EFL classroom. Quantitative and qualitative statistical data analyses were applied to examine foreign language enjoyment and public speaking class anxiety. Descriptive data analysis showed that the learners had a medium-to-high foreign language degree of enjoyment and a low level of public speaking anxiety. Besides, they reported more enjoyment than public speaking anxiety in class. Further qualitative data analysis revealed 12 sub-themes and four main themes of *Teacher, Learning, Class Activities, and Class Atmosphere* in explaining

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their enjoyment, as well as eight sub-themes and four main themes of *Exam Phobia, Reaction/Feedback, Personal Failure, and Lack of Self-Confidence* for speaking anxiety. The findings provide implications for language teachers and policymakers to gain better insights into factors underlying enjoyment and speaking anxiety in the field of foreign language learning.

**Keywords:** EFL learners, EFL classroom, Foreign Language Enjoyment, Public Speaking Class Anxiety

Emotions are “short-lived, feeling-purposive-expressive-bodily responses that help us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we face during important life events” (Reeve, 2015, p. 340). Recent attention to the crucial role of emotion in learning a language has led to several studies (e.g., Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele, Magdalena, & Saito, 2019), dealing with the possible role that positive emotions have in the foreign language classroom and academic achievement. One positive emotion is enjoyment, which is closely associated with the core emotion of joy, which is used regularly concerning the enjoyableness of an activity, a job, a class, or a task. In the domain of second/foreign language (L2) teaching/learning, enjoyment is described as an emotional experience and a type of situation-specific emotion in learning tasks. It is viewed as “individual dispositions to react with a specific level of enjoyment to specific situations within an academic context” (Goetz et al., 2006, p. 326). Enjoyment in a foreign language, which is known as foreign language enjoyment (FLE), is defined as “a complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of the challenge and perceived ability that reflects the human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks” during learning a foreign language (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, p. 216). FLE is described as a psychologically positive activating state which can propel the foreign language learner into action and intensifies the motivational processes (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). It takes place when learners not only meet their

needs but also exceed them to do or achieve something new or even unexpected during the foreign language learning process (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2004b).

In contrast, negative emotions are associated with specific actions such as anger, worry, or the desire to flee and disgust to remove (Fredrickson, 2005). Anxiety is a negative emotion which is the mental uneasiness induced through fear of danger or misfortune, and it is one of the critical obstacles learners need to tackle in language classes (Horwitz, 2001). Anxiety in a foreign language, which is a determining factor in learning a foreign language (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1994), is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 128). Closely related to the construct of foreign language anxiety is the concept of speaking anxiety in the classroom, namely, public speaking class anxiety (PSCA), which is oral performance anxiety. PSCA often leads to the learners’ avoidance of participation in classroom activities like discussion or lecture (Aydin, 2001). In Hayaramea’s (2016) terms, PSCA, occasionally described as communication apprehension, is “the fear experienced by a person when delivering (or preparing to deliver) a speech to an audience” in the class (p. 4). According to Pertaub, Slater, and Barker (2002), PSCA is the fear of speaking in front of a group of individuals in the class, and it is a form of social phobia with great social significance. It may result in learners’ considerable personal distress, frustration, and depression.

Speaking in another language is often viewed as one of the most anxiety-provoking aspects of language learning for L2 learners because anxiety is a variable that can obstruct learners from acquiring and developing speaking skills (Oya, Manalo, & Greenwood, 2004). As Pertaub, et al. (2002) state, anxiety typically arises when speakers have to give a public speech or interact

with a stranger because they are afraid to be humiliated or judged by others. This study, thus, sought to examine FLE— a positive activating state and a powerful motivator in foreign language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre 2014b; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2018)—as well as PSCA—a resisting negative emotion related to fear of oral performance in front of a group of individuals in the class (Hayaramae, 2016; Pertaub, et al., 2002)—in the context of Iran, where students learn English as a foreign language (EFL). FLE and PSCA are two sides of positive and negative emotions, which can influence learners’ achievement in foreign language classes (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Horwitz, 2001). More Specifically, this study surveyed a sample of Iranian EFL learners to learn about their FLE and PSCA and see to what extent they would experience enjoyment and feel anxious about speaking in their EFL classroom. Moreover, it explored the sources of the enjoyment or speaking anxiety, that is, the plausible factors resulting in FLE and PSCA in such a context, with the hope to help stakeholders increase enjoyment in learning EFL and address appropriate strategies to alleviate such an anxiety type in EFL public speaking classes.

### Literature Review

#### Foreign Language Enjoyment

Keltner, Oatley, and Jenkins (2013) defined emotion as “multifaceted responses to events that we see as challenges or opportunities in our inner or outer world, events that are important to our goals” (p. 27). According to this definition, emotions are physically and psychologically respondents to the outside world. In other words, the feeling begins with a cognitive assessment of the individual’s current condition, indicating a person’s reaction to a particular situation or emotional tone. Fredrickson (2005) divides emotions into two categories: positive and negative. Whereas negative deactivating

emotions such as anxiety are associated with negative accomplishment, positive activating emotions, like activity-related enjoyment, are positively related to the academic success of students (Pekrun, Götz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). As MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) assert, negative emotions cause inappropriate concentration and limit the potential language input, whereas positive emotions reduce the adverse emotional effects. Based on Fredrickson's (2003) broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions can "broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources" (p. 219). Despite these speculations on the positive role emotions in L2 communication, it is somehow surprising that, until recently, emotions have not received much attention in many educational contexts. Perhaps, one exception is anxiety, the effects of which in foreign language learning are explored extensively (Gkonou, Daubney, & Dewaele, 2017).

The current change in focus to positive emotions is ascribed to the rise of positive psychology (Seligman & Csíkszentmihályi, 2000), the main branch in the field of psychology which focuses on creativity, well-being, personal strengths, happiness, and the characteristics of positive groups/people (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). With this perspective in mind, enjoyment is such a complex positive emotion that can have a positive impact on the long-term resilience and hardiness of the learners. Enjoyment in a foreign language is assumed as personal dispositions to respond with a level of joy to individual circumstances and tasks in the process of language learning, particularly in an educational context (Goetz et al., 2006). As Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014b) maintain, FLE is characterized by highlighting how enjoyment differs from pleasure. Enjoyment is described as the pleasant feelings that come from going beyond homeostatic boundaries and extending oneself to find new

experiences, especially when a person encounters challenging tasks. However, pleasure is described as the pleasant feeling a person develops when a homeostatic requirement, such as hunger and sex, is fulfilled hedonically (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). That is to say, enjoyment is a sense of accomplishment that facilitates learners' development (Elahi Shirvan, Taherian, & Yazdanmehr, 2020; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Indeed, the degree to which a student frequently experiences enjoyable episodes in L2 settings would be far from being set. Yet, it is confirmed that enjoyment can expedite learning and offer new opportunities and experiences for learners (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014b).

Empirical studies on the enjoyment variable have recently been expanded (e.g., Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; MacIntyre, & Vincze, 2017; Goetz et al., 2006). Research on FLE, however, is inadequate, especially in the EFL context. In 2014, Dewaele and MacIntyre designed Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES) through the careful study of the relevant literature in a large-scale survey study, including 1746 participants from all over the world and studied Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and FLE. The results demonstrated that the FLE levels were higher than the FLCA levels. Besides, Both FLCA and FLE pertained to several independent variables such as the number of known languages, perception of the level of proficiency by learners, level of education, and level of the target language.

Dewaele, Witney, Saito, and Dewaele (2018) examined whether and to what extent FLCA and FLE were affected by a number of internal learner variables and the classroom/teacher variables in a particular academic context. The results of 189 British graduates of high schools indicated that some factors, such as the role of teachers, played a role, though limited, in mediating learners' anxiety levels. The female students were also significantly more

proud of their accomplishments, felt that they had discovered more exciting topics, and had greater fun in class than the males. Also, Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) conducted a study with a number of high school students in Britain who were studying different foreign languages. The results showed that, first, both FLE and FLCA significantly correlated with foreign language scores. Second, FLE, compared with FLCA, was more strongly related to foreign language test scores.

More recently, Elahi Shirvan et al. (2020) investigated the dynamism of different facets of FLE across various timescales. More specifically, they explored two EFL learners' moments of experiencing enjoyment on four timescales, including seconds, minutes, weeks, and months, in an English course. They used open-ended interviews across months, diaries across weeks, enjoyment meters (an A4 size sheet of paper which had thermometer-shaped figures to mark the level of enjoyment) across minutes, and the idiodynamic method across seconds using a software program. The findings of their study indicated that FLE fluctuated in terms of a hierarchy of temporal scales, from moment-to-moment changes to the changes over months.

### **Speaking Anxiety**

It is vital to present a review of a well-research negative emotion, that is, language anxiety, to get a perception of the need to explore enjoyment in foreign language learning. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1994), the interest in the role of emotion in the L2 learning process was stimulated in the late 1970s by the research into language learning anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986), who were among the first researchers to explore anxiety in L2 learning, discussed speaking anxiety as part of stress and fear in a foreign language. They defined it as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the

uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 127). However, in academic research, anxiety is generally described as being a trait, state, or situation-specific. Trait anxiety is a reasonably stable tendency of personality in which an individual may feel anxious in a variety of situations. State anxiety, conversely, is a transient condition experienced at a specific moment; and situational anxiety represents a trait that occurs in specific circumstances (Spielberger, Anton & Bedell, 1976). The research about language learning anxiety has demonstrated that language learning is situation-specific (Horwitz, 2001), namely, a trait that is present in situations of language learning, such as speaking a foreign language in the class.

Speaking is one of the most menacing dimensions in the language learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxiety may also cause less proficient EFL learners to perform poorly if the main purpose of language teaching is to enable learners to speak, communicate, and interact in a foreign language. As a crucial affective variable, anxiety can inhibit students in class from improving speaking skills (Oya et al., 2004). Many anxiety-provoking factors identified by the students seem to be caused by different speaking activities in a language class. For example, Pertaub et al. (2002) assert that anxiety typically arises when speakers have to give a public speech or interact with a stranger/foreigner because they are afraid of being embarrassed by others. Public speaking anxiety, as Bodie (2010) states, is “a sub-component of communication anxiety, physiological arousal, negative self-focused cognition, or behavioral concomitants in response to an expected or actual presentation” (p. 70-71). Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) state that L2 speaking anxiety entails the fear of communication apprehension and negative evaluation. Communication apprehension indicates anxiety regarding interpersonal communication, and fear of negative evaluation deals with the worry about being evaluated negatively by others (Horwitz et al., 1986).



Several studies in the literature (e.g., Heng, Abdullah & Yosaf, 2012; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012) have either studied the level of speaking anxiety faced by learners in various contexts or studied speaking anxiety in relation with other variables, such as gender (Öztürk, 2009). In a Turkish context, for example, Öztürk (2009) examined the PSCA level and the perceptions of foreign-speaking anxiety among EFL students. The results showed a low level of speaking anxiety among Turkish students; yet, interview data analysis indicated that most of the students viewed speaking in the class as a significant cause of stress. Also, Heng, Abdullah, and Yosaf (2012) investigated aspects of language anxiety alongside the main sub-constructs suggested by Horwitz et al. (1986). The collected data were in the form of a survey questionnaire from 700 university students in Malaysia. The researchers highlighted the role of teachers as the main contributor to the decrease of FLCA. More recently, Raja (2017) explored the reasons behind the anxiety level in undergraduate students of business school in a public speaking class in India. Fifty students of a reputable business school in Karachi were recruited as the participants and a quantitative research paradigm was used. The results of the study showed that 75% of the students admitted their fear of public speaking and 95% of the business students indicated that they could overcome the fear of public speaking if proper instruction were provided.

FLE and PSCA may have some effects on foreign language learners' achievement (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014b). However, the review of related literature shows that, while there is much research on negative emotions like FLA, empirical research on FLE in the EFL classroom is scanty, and it requires an in-depth investigation. Also, FLE and PSCA variables have not been investigated together in the EFL context of Iran. In such a situation, it is particularly important to study both negative and positive emotions at the same time. Such a study bears significance for its

implications for learning a foreign language, particularly for oral performance in L2. It can serve as a contribution to the existing literature in the area of FLE and PSCA. It can also help both L2 learners and teachers in attending effectively to a foreign language.

Emotions are at the heart of successful foreign language learning and can increase or decrease willingness to communicate (Dewaele et al., 2019) as well as students' achievement in foreign language learning (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017). Enjoyment and anxiety, as two sides of positive and negative emotions, have been studied in language learning (e.g., Baran-Łuczars, 2014; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014b; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2018; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). Nevertheless, research on the characteristics or facets of FLE and PSCA in L2 learning, which are specific and newly introduced types of enjoyment and anxiety, and the factors which result in FLE and PSCA in EFL contexts, particularly in the EFL context of Iran, is still inadequate and deserves more attention, particularly when they are studied together. As Dewaele et al (2019) and Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014b) assert, the inclusion of positive emotions in research designs complements earlier L2 research that focused exclusively on negative emotions in L2. Thus, the present study adopted a sequential mixed methods approach to investigate both FLE and PSCA in an Iranian EFL context. It initially sought to survey a sample of Iranian EFL learners to see to what extent they would experience enjoyment and feel anxious about speaking in their EFL classroom and learn about the dominant aspect(s) of their FLE and PSCA in a such context. Also, in the follow-up qualitative phase, it aimed to explore the sources of enjoyment or speaking anxiety in such a context. Thus, it set out to address the following questions:

1. To what extent is there FLE and PSCA among the Iranian EFL learners, and what is/are the dominant aspect(s) of such enjoyment and anxiety?

2. How do they characterize enjoyment and speaking anxiety in foreign language classrooms?

## Method

### Participants

A total of 128 EFL learners, who were all Iranian native speakers of Persian and were at the intermediate and upper-intermediate level of English, participated in the research. They included 66 females and 62 males with an average age of 16.3 years old. They were selected using convenience sampling; In addition to the relative cost and time, accessibility was another reason, and the most important one, for choosing this kind of sampling. The participants were chosen from the student population of several private foreign language institutes in Isfahan (n = 50), Shahrekord (n = 29), and Zarrinshahr (n = 49) in Iran where the present researchers could access them. All the participants have studied English for more than four years. The intermediate and upper-intermediate level participants were purposefully selected. They had sufficient English language learning experience for the study purposes and could answer the items or questions in the research. The same EFL participants (n = 128) took part in the qualitative phase of the study.

### Instruments

**Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale.** The first instrument was the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES), developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014b), to examine the participants' FLE and level of enjoyment in the foreign (here English) language. It included 21 five-point Likert scale items, with each item scored from 1 to 5 (*1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree*). Following the demographic section, the EFL learners responded to 21 items assessing FLE. The time for

completing the 21 items was approximately 15 min. FLES had been validated by Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014a). Its validity was established through factor analysis, which supported the construct validity of the questionnaire. Confirmatory factor analysis supported the hypothesized one-factor model. Also, the questionnaire pilot-tested with 15 international foreign language learners by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014b), and was then employed with a total of 1746 foreign language learners. Moreover, the content validity of FLES was determined through experts' judgments and pilot-testing with 30 intermediate-level EFL learners from a language institute in Isfahan. To find out whether there were any ambiguous items and eliminate any misunderstanding on behalf of the Iranian EFL learners, they were asked to fill out the FLE questionnaire. Besides, two applied linguistics professors with language teacher education background proofread the questionnaire to ensure that it was accurately planned for the purpose of the study. Moreover, the high reliability index of this scale was reported by several studies (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014a; Dewaele et al. 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Also, the coefficient alpha reliability of FLES in the present investigation was .78, indicating an acceptable level of internal validity.

**Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale.** Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale (PSCAS), which was developed by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012), was used to assess public speaking class anxiety among the participants. The PSCAS included 17 Likert scale items to assess to what extent the EFL learners were anxious. This valid scale required about 13 minutes to complete. Answers to the 17-item questionnaire were given on a scale of 5 points (5 = *strongly agree*, 4 = *agree*, 3 = *undecided*, 2 = *disagree*, 1 = *strongly disagree*). This questionnaire had been validated through content analysis by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). According to them, "all of the items were validated by three teachers of English with over ten years of teaching

experiences, one assistant professor and other two assistant professors with Ph.D.” (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012, p. 29). The teachers and professor judged whether each item measured the speaking component being studied in the classroom setting. Also, its construct validity was established through factor analysis. The aim was to select items representing a measure of speaking anxiety in a public speaking class. Four factors were molding around the speaking component, in which factor one (communication anxiety in a public speaking class) was the main construct, whereas the other factors were considered as subcomponents (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012). Furthermore, in the present study, the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through experts’ judgments in the context of Iran, and it was also pilot-tested with 30 intermediate EFL learners from a language institute in Isfahan. Also, a content validation form was given to two experts (two lecturers at a state university in Iran), asking them to rate each item of the questionnaire based on some criteria such as the appropriateness and clarity of the items in representing the speaking anxiety. Moreover, according to Yaikhong and Usaha (2012), the internal consistency coefficient of the questionnaire with a sample of 76 second-year students in an English program was found to be acceptable (.84). The reliability index of the test, measured by coefficient alpha in the present study, turned out to be high (.83), too.

**Focused Essay.** Focused essays were used to address the second research question and learn about the respondents’ causes or triggers of enjoyment and speaking anxiety in the foreign language classroom. This method/technique has been used in several other studies (e.g., Dewaele, & MacIntyre, 2014a; MacIntyre, et al., 2011; MacIntyre, Burns, & Jessome, 2011; MacIntyre, & Gardner, 1991) to make language learners concentrate on their own reactions to events making a given type of experience highly salient to them and find out the underlying factors resulting in specific experience. A focused essay

includes an open-ended question in which respondents are asked to write an episode or on a specific event (MacIntyre, et al., 2011). Following Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014b), the same EFL participants were asked to write two episodes, in two separate sessions, about a specific event that they enjoyed and about a negative anxiety experience in the classroom. The questions/essay title was as follows: “Describe one specific event or episode in the EFL class that you really enjoyed the most and try to describe your feeling in as much detail as possible.”, and “Describe one episode or specific (speaking) event in your EFL class/context in which you were anxious, and try to describe your feeling in as much detail as possible.”. Because the collected data on the focused essays/episodes were subjected to qualitative data analysis, to establish the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, several qualitative validity strategies were used (see Procedure section).

### **Procedure**

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design in order to answer the research questions. The method consisted of two phases: First, the quantitative data were collected and analyzed to find out the participants’ FLE and PSCA profiles and examine to what extent the Iranian EFL students experienced language enjoyment and public speaking anxiety in their English classrooms. Second, the quantitative data were analyzed to help explain or complement the data about the topics (FLE and PSCA). The quantitative survey method involved the two Likert-type questionnaires. The responses to the Likert-type items were analyzed statistically. The surveys were undertaken in several private language institutes in Isfahan, Zarrinshar, and Shahrekord in the spring semester in 2019. Both surveys were piloted with 30 intermediate EFL learners to check their internal consistency reliability in the context of Iran and ensure that the questionnaire was carefully and

accurately planned and eliminate any misunderstanding on behalf of participants.

Firstly, 200 EFL learners were invited to take part in the study. However, just 128 EFL learners indicated their consent to participate in the research voluntarily and fill out both questionnaires and write the focused essays (episodes). Secondly, after receiving permission, these 128 EFL learners were invited to complete the FLES and PSCAS in two sessions in a week, at the end of the spring semester in 2019. They were asked to complete FLES and then write their focused essays or episodes. They had 15 min to complete the FLES questionnaire. Then, they were given adequate time to write about an episode in which they had experienced enjoyment. Almost all the participants wrote their half-page episodes within 30-45 min. In another session in a week, the PSCAS questionnaire was administered to the same respondents. They had 12 min to complete the questionnaire. Then, they wrote about an episode in which they had experienced speaking anxiety. They were informed that they could write down about their experiences in Persian or English. They were given adequate time (about 30-45 min) for the focused essays.

Third, the quantitative data collected through administering the two questionnaires were subjected to descriptive statistics, carried out by using SPSS (version 21). The data from the focused essays were subjected to qualitative data analysis. Following Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler, (2006), the data were first prepared and organized through making word processing files. Second, they were reviewed and explored to get a general sense of the data. Third, they were subjected to coding. The initial immersion of the coding phase was achieved through the process of going back and forth independently among the episodes of enjoyment and speaking anxiety by two judges/coders—an M.A. student and an associate professor of applied linguistics with an English teaching background—who coded and then find the dominant themes

from about 30 codes, add descriptions and figure out the main issues under study. To increase the dependability of the data analysis, inter-rater coding reliability was obtained. It was above 80% agreement between coders on 95% of the codes. Also, when conflicting perspectives were found, the coders reexamined the data sources to resolve the differences. Furthermore, the coders tried to remain faithful to the participants' perspectives and improve the validity of theme development. Member checking was carried out to ensure the dependability and credibility of the relevant data on FLE and PSCA by returning the results to a group of the accessible participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. The coding analytical method included a first- and second-level coding process, and the identified chunks were clustered into common minor and major themes across all the narrations. This was done through the use of MAXQDA 18 software. Finally, after the data were coded for the major concepts, the emerging themes were refined to gain a better insight into what caused FLE and PSCA.

## Results

### Quantitative Phase

The data from the quantitative and qualitative phases were analyzed separately and triangulated at a later point, when possible, to check whether the results from both sources complemented or validated one another. In order to find out the FLE and PSCA profiles of the EFL learners and answer the first research question of the study, descriptive statistics of the responses to items in both questionnaires were obtained. Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics, that is, means and standard deviations, regarding the learners' responses to the items in the FLES questionnaire.



Table 1.

*Descriptive Statistics for Items in FLES*

Items	FLE	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	I can be creative.	4.02	0.78
2	I can laugh off embarrassing mistakes in the FL.	3.15	1.23
3	I don't get bored.	3.44	1.23
4	I enjoy it.	4.37	0.90
5	I feel as though I'm a different person during the FL class.	3.52	1.06
6	I learned to express myself better in the FL.	4.07	0.78
7	I'm a worthy member of the FL class.	3.50	1.20
8	I've learnt interesting things.	4.43	0.81
9	In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.	3.89	0.97
10	It's a positive environment.	4.10	1.07
11	It's cool to know a FL.	4.44	0.91
12	It's fun.	4.24	0.87
13	Making errors is part of the learning process.	4.14	0.82
14	The peers are nice.	3.90	0.95
15	The teacher is encouraging.	4.45	0.76
16	The teacher is friendly.	4.43	0.85
17	The teacher is supportive.	4.39	0.85
18	There is a good atmosphere.	4.16	0.80
19	We form a tight group.	3.42	0.96
20	We have common "legends," such as running jokes.	3.62	1.01
21	We laugh a lot.	3.93	0.93
<b>Total</b>		3.91	0.94

The descriptive data revealed three points. One is that the item means ranged from 3.15 to 4.45 with small variations. The item means were above the possible middle point (2.5) on a 5-point scale. Even the lowest item mean score, which was related to class-related aspects of FLE (item # 2), was above the possible item median of 2.5. Item 2, which had the lowest item mean was about the laughter and it represented the fun aspect of FLE. As Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014b) point out, laughter takes place when things do not go as planned, and it can have a healthy impact on language learners. It could take

the negative emotional tension out of the class. The second point that is the highest item mean went for item 15. This item indicated the role of the teacher in the classroom, and it was related to the interest and positive environment aspects of FLE, highlighting the importance of the interest and positive environment in the foreign (here English) language class. Statistical analysis showed that the interest and positive environment in the foreign language class were dominant aspects. The other items with high item mean scores, such as items # 16, 8, and 19, also represented the interest and positive environment aspects in the foreign language class, made by the teacher and, sometimes, by peers. The third point is that the overall mean score ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) was above the possible middle point on a 5-point scale, though not very high, indicating that the participants experienced the medium or medium-to-high level of FLE, linked to the learners' creativity, fun, interest, or the positive environment in the English learning process.

Table 2 reports descriptive statistics regarding the participants' responses to the items in the PSCAS.

Table 2.

*Descriptive Statistics for Items in PSCAS*

Items	Reading Strategies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English.	2.87	1.24
2	I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in advance.	2.60	1.22
3	In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	2.63	1.29
4	I feel confident while I am speaking English.	2.22	1.05
5	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.	2.14	1.12
6	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.	1.97	1.16

## INVESTIGATING FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENJOYMENT

Items	Reading Strategies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
7	I get nervous when the English teacher asks me to speak English, which I have prepared in advance.	2.03	1.11
8	I have no fear of speaking English.	2.21	1.09
9	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on.	2.58	1.12
10	I feel relaxed while I am speaking English.	2.13	0.96
11	It embarrasses me to volunteer to go out first to speak English.	2.46	1.26
12	I face the prospect of speaking English with confidence.	2.14	0.95
13	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English.	2.52	1.10
14	I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English.	2.63	1.20
15	I dislike using my voice and body expressively while I am speaking English.	2.53	1.19
16	I have trouble coordinating my movements while I am speaking English.	2.50	1.22
17	Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.	2.55	1.29
<b>Total</b>		2.35	1.15

Based on the descriptive data in Table 2, the highest item mean score went for item 1 ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ). It was indicative of inadequate performance in speaking English. According to Yaikhong and Usaha (2012), this item was related to the aspect of test anxiety. In other words, items such as item 1 and 17, which received relatively high item means above the possible middle point on a 5-point scale, were indicative of test anxiety as evidenced by fear of inadequate performance. However, item 7, which was related to testing anxiety, did not receive a high item mean score, perhaps because most participants, as mentioned above, considered the role of the teacher very encouraging. Based on the statistical analysis, communication apprehension in the public speaking class was another dominant aspect of speaking anxiety along with the test anxiety. Items 2 ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ), 3

( $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ), 14 ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ), 15 ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ), which received high item means, were all informative of communication apprehension. Items 2, 3, and 15 were indicative of anticipated anxious behaviors in speaking English, and item 14 was indicative nervousness while waiting to speak English. All these three items manifested the communication apprehension aspect of PSCA. Moreover, the data analysis showed that the aspect of comfort in using English received less priority. Such items as items 10 ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = .96$ ), and 12 ( $M = 2.14$ ,  $SD = .95$ ), which received the lowest item means, were reflective of comfort in speaking English. More importantly, the data analysis of the PSCA scores showed that the total mean score ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) was a little below the possible middle point on a 5-point scale, indicating that the overall level of anxiety in public speaking was low or low to moderate.

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the variables FLE and PSCA to make comparisons more manageable and have a better picture of the participants regarding the two variables in question.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of FLE and PSCA Scores

Variable	N	Total Mean	Scaled Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
FLE	128	82.13	3.91	0.94	-1.14	0.24
PSCA	128	40.05	2.35	1.15	-.36	-.90

As demonstrated in Table 3, the overall mean for FLE raw scores was 82.13. A total score of more than 84 is considered as high, and scores between 84-63 are considered as medium. Thus, the overall mean of the sample was close to high, but still in the medium range. Similarly, the FLES mean score

was 3.91, located between the third (i.e., undecided) and fourth (i.e. agree) options, indicating a moderate degree of FLE. Moreover, the total mean of raw scores for PSCA was 40.05. The participants who score above 68 are considered highly anxious, those who score between 68-51 are moderately anxious, and those who score lower than 51 are less anxious participants (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012). Accordingly, the total mean of the sample was relatively small. Similarly, the PSCA scaled mean was 2.35, located between the third (i.e., undecided) and fourth (i.e., disagree) options, indicating a relatively low level of public speaking anxiety.

### Qualitative Phase

**Foreign Language Enjoyment.** The focused essays i.e., episodes, were intended to find out about the major factors and characteristics of enjoyment and public speaking anxiety experienced by EFL learners during foreign language learning. To address the second research question, the collected data were initially coded through the process of going back and forth among the narrated episodes of enjoyment. It was completed until the following eleven categories (i.e., sub-codes) emerged: *Teacher's Encouragement, Teaching Method, Watching Movies, Debates, Games, Class/Textbook Topics, Gaining Knowledge, Speaking Ability, Class Fun, Peers, Friendly Relationship*. Later, these sub-codes from the first-level coding resulted in four major themes in the second-level coding process, which helped us explain major themes underlying the coded data segments and determine factors contributing to FLE. The sub-themes and major themes are displayed in the map of the FLE experience in Figure 1.

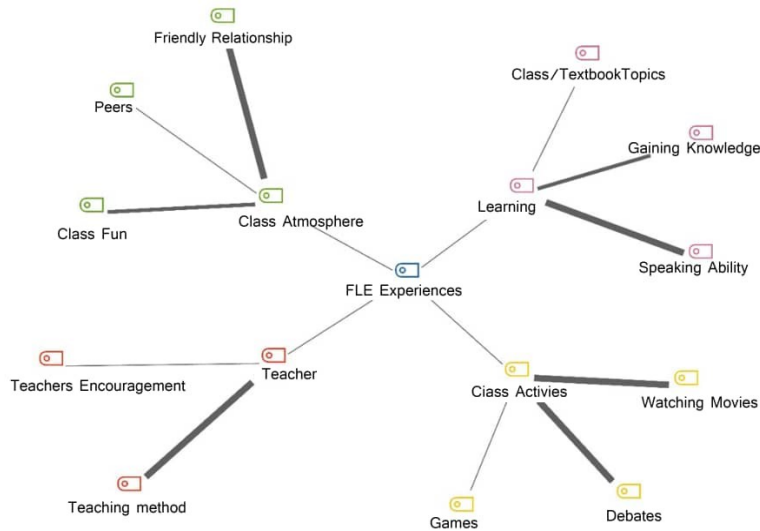


Figure 1. *The Map of The FLE Experience*

As shown in Figure 1, four categories were derived in the second-level coding: *Teacher*, *Class Activities*, *Learning*, and *Class Atmosphere*.

**Teacher.** The first theme, named *Teacher*, included the initial sub-themes (sub-codes) of the *Teacher's Encouragement* and *Teacher's Teaching Method*. The majority of the participants reported personal or public encouragement from their teacher gave them a feeling of satisfaction or enjoyment. The praise was in the form of good marks for a task or explicit positive feedback in front of other classmates. Some participants also mentioned that they were cheered by the teacher's method in the class, and they believed a good teacher could boost students' understanding of English learning. For instance, one of the participants (Maryam, 16 years old) mentions:

I think I am the youngest in the class, and sometimes this makes me a little nervous, but after a while, I step out of my comfort zone and start to talk in English. This mostly happens because of my teacher's encouragement. She encouraged me to speak up in class. She understood that I was shy, so she asked more and more about me. I felt amused in the course by laughing, singing songs, and even listening to English music was fun to me. Once she asked me to sing the "Hi, I'm Amy" song, the first song in the English Starter book, and, as I remembered, I sang the song as loud as possible with my teacher and classmates. (X127, female)

**Class Activities.** The second main theme was labeled as *Class Activities*. It included three sub-themes of *Watching Movies*, *Debates*, and *Games*. Discussing different topics, for example, can enhance students' comprehension and stimulate active learning. Some participants mentioned that they were cheered by discussing the issues in the class debates. One of them (Reza, 22 years old) stated, "I am a fan of our class discussion and debate because I think in English and I talk in English. It makes me happy, and I enjoy my time". Some participants also appreciated movie-watching as it made them learn new materials. One student (Farhad, 17 years old) explained, "I started to like learning English when our teacher asked us to watch short movies like 'Problems of Mandy at School' or 'Listen to Me' in the class. It was fun". Also, as one of the students described her experience below, the game used in the class was a source of enjoyment and encouraged some students to take a more active part in their learning:

Once our teacher played a game in the class together with students. The teacher stopped playing music from time to time. The rule was that when she stopped playing the music, we had to make a sentence using a new

grammatical structure we learned. If our answers were wrong grammatically, we had a funny punishment. I enjoyed the game because learning wasn't dull. (X39, female)

**Learning.** The third emerged theme was the *Learning* aspect, which encompassed *Class/Textbook Topics*, *Gaining Knowledge*, and *Speaking Ability*. The participants, thus, had their share of enjoyment due to learning something useful, and related it to class/textbook topics, gaining knowledge, and speaking skills as the crucial sources of enjoyment. Some of the participants linked their classroom enjoyment with the topics and issues in their instructional textbooks, such as family, holidays, and pop culture, which they believed they could enhance their willingness to learn English. One student wrote: "I had fun when I read a text about holidays, especially those we don't celebrate in our country, like Thanksgiving or Halloween." Additionally, some participants reported positive emotions when their speaking ability/skill or general knowledge was concerned. They felt that they increased their educational knowledge through English learning. One student (Armin, 22 years old) explained:

One session we happened to talk about artificial intelligence or AI... I enjoyed that because I gained some knowledge, you know something useful... how AI could be used for facial recognition or driving a car in the future, ... and we talked about what was going to happen in the future... It was fun. (X95, male).

**Class Atmosphere.** The four sub-themes of *Class Fun*, *Peers*, and *Friendly Relationship* were collapsed into the major theme of *Class Atmosphere*, which is described as a necessary component of teaching/learning that helps create and maintain rapport between students and



teachers (Lee & Mak, 2018). There were some instances in which the students described the behaviors of their classmates and how they made them have fun in English. One female student (Roya, 17 years-old) wrote, “It was enjoyable when we told jokes with my classmates in the class.” She described the behavior of one of her classmates who told a joke about an English teacher.

Also, some of the participants experienced enjoyable moments through a friendly relationship in their classroom which made them boost their motivation to learn English. For example, a participant (Aida, 15 years old), reported:

Our students have a close and friendly relationship with the teacher. Once, I made a cake and brought it to the class because it was the teacher’s birthday. We wanted to make her surprised, so we decorated the class earlier. As soon as she entered the class, we shouted and sang a song for her. That day we laughed. I had a great time with my friends and the teacher. (X45, female)

**Public Speaking Class Anxiety.** Similar to the data on FLE, PSCA data were used to find codes, and they were then summarized into sub-themes. Figure 2 demonstrates eight sub-themes (sub-codes) through the second-level coding of data analysis, which resulted in four major themes in the final round of analysis. The four emerged themes from the data analysis are displayed on the map and explained below.

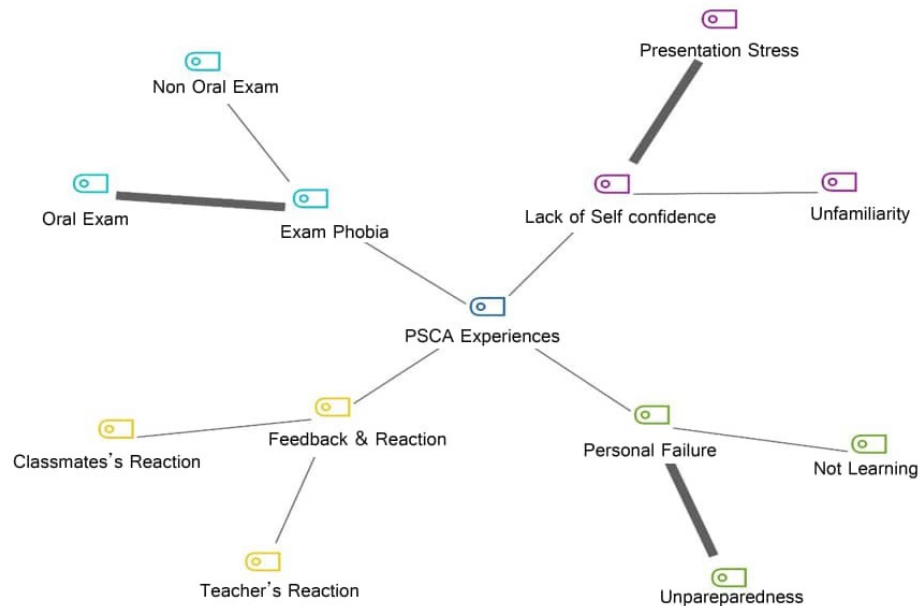


Figure 2. *The Map of The PSCA Experience*

**Exam Phobia.** One major theme was *Exam Phobia*, which included *Oral Exam* and *Non-Oral Exam* sub-themes. Many participants associated their classroom anxiety with their phobia of a test, whether it was oral or non-oral. One female student (Somayeh, 15 years old), commented:

Most of my stress was about the time when I was going to have my oral exam. Once, for our mid-term speaking exam, I couldn't study enough, and when we were in the class, our teacher called me as the first candidate for the exam. I went to her, but as soon as I started..., I got stressed .... I didn't get a good score. It was a stressful situation. (X55, female, 15)

**Feedback/Reaction.** *Teachers' and classmate's reactions* made up the major theme of *Feedback/Reaction*, which referred to the teacher's or classmate's judgment or feedback as the source of anxiety. Some episodes dealt with examples of negative feedback or reaction at the time of speaking, such as accounts about the response of the teacher to the participant's presentation, when they could not express themselves in the class well. Also, some had experienced a fear of negative judgment by their classmates at the time of oral performance. For instance, a female participant (Sara, 15-year-old girl) who suffered from speaking anxiety mentioned:

I had a bad experience. Once, I got nervous when the teacher asked me a question about my neighborhood... to describe it ... even though I knew the answers. I was afraid of being laughed at by others because of my mistakes. When my classmates looked at me, I got stress (X4, female, 15)

**Personal Failure.** *Unpreparedness* and *Not Learning* were subcategories under the theme of *Personal Failure*. The data confirmed the presence of speaking anxiety; some students did not study enough and were not prepared for their oral presentation or did not prepare their class assignments or homework. One of the participants (Ali, 17 years old) shared his story:

Once I wasn't ready for my oral exam in the final term, and I got a lousy score. I couldn't speak fluently, I had a lot of pauses, and I mispronounced some easy words. I got ashamed for not practicing enough for that session, ... a bad experience..., I got so anxious. (X66, male)

Also, the lack of learning was another relevant issue which supported the existence of speaking anxiety among some students. Reportedly, they could

not express themselves adequately due to a lack of appropriate knowledge and learning regarding their activity; thus, they felt anxious when it came to the self-assessment of learning. For instance, a female student described her story when she could not understand the meaning of some words, failing to do a task, which was easy for other students.

**Lack of Self-confidence.** The last emerged theme included the subcategories *Unfamiliarity* and *Presentation Stress*, which were due to a lack of self-confidence. The data provided evidence about the presence of speaking anxiety due to factors such as being *unfamiliar* with English class context, not knowing the teacher or classmates. A fair amount of speaking anxiety was related to a lack of confidence at the time of *oral presentation*. Most participants' episodes revealed that presentation stress affected their performance. One of them (Neda, 19 years old) described it in this way:

Whenever I have to talk and stand in front of the classroom to talk in English, I get stressed, and my body freezes. Two weeks ago, I had a presentation on 'summer camp'. At that moment, I lost my confidence in speaking and I was shy to speak about my outdoor activities and fun sporting events... I just wanted to cry or at least leave the class, but I couldn't. I had a bad feeling .... (X66, male)

### Discussion

The first research question was intended to investigate language enjoyment and speaking anxiety among a sample of Iranian EFL learners and examine the level of the intensity of FLE and PSCA. The results demonstrated that, first, there was a medium to a high degree of foreign language enjoyment (i.e., English) among the Iranian EFL participants. The mean score for FLE in the present study was not less than that one reported by prior research (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014b). The reported mean (3.91) is very close to, even

a little higher than, the international sample mean (3.82) reported in Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014b) study. This result is a positive point, indicating that Iranian EFL learners find enjoyment while learning English. As Ryan (2009) states, Asian students frequently assert they enjoy learning English. Second, as the statistical analysis showed, Iranian EFL students experienced some degree of speaking anxiety. However, it was not high, and the level of FLE was higher than the level of PSCA in the sample. This finding confirms that FLE and PSCA represent distinct dimensions of a single classroom emotion continuum. The participants experienced both FLE and PSCA. However, those learners with higher FLE levels might have experienced lower PSCA levels.

Furthermore, quantitative data highlighted the interest and positive environment aspects of FLE in the EFL context of Iran. Interest in their teachers, peers, and class activities was the key to the high level of the participants' FLE. That is to say, the results endorsed that among the several potential sources which made the students experienced great enjoyment while learning English was the teacher- and class-related aspects. Cultural, social, or personality traits may influence FLE. More importantly, according to the present findings, factors such as the teacher and class events that affect the learning process can greatly shape FLE and reduce PSCA. The data in the qualitative part of the analysis also supports this finding. One reason that the EFL learners had higher FLE than PSCA is the teacher. The teacher's role is very crucial in helping students to manage their L2 learning and learn collaboratively with their peers to become more independent learners. This argument finds support from the earlier results about the great impact that teachers in other settings had on their students' FLE (Dewaele et al., 2018). Moreover, creating a positive, non-threatening environment in the classroom will improve students' enjoyment in a foreign language and eventually

enhance their ability to learn it (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). The vital role of the class environment in FLE is confirmed by the complementary data in the qualitative data.

The qualitative data collected to address the second research question enriched the quantitative results related to FLE or PSCA. The data analysis revealed several major themes for FLE. One theme was the *Teacher*. Reportedly, the teacher's encouragement, manner, and the method of his/her teaching were considerably related to enjoyment. This finding supports the quantitative results in that the items with higher mean scores were indicative of the role of the teacher and peers in the classroom and manifested the interest and environment aspects of FLE. Research (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, 2019) has also emphasized the role of the teachers in building rapport, joy, and happiness in foreign language learning. The second major theme was *Learning*. This indicates that having sufficient background content information is beneficial for EFL learners, whereas a lack of knowledge might lead to a reluctance to communicate in English, hence less enjoyment. The findings are also in line with Dewaele et al., (2017) research reporting that enjoyable class and topics can make communication tasks more exciting and increase interest in L2 learning. Based on the results, willingness to talk about topics such as hobbies, family, and relationships is enjoyable for Iranian EFL learners. As MacIntyre and Vincze (2017) point out, the more learners are interested in the topics and tasks in the classroom, the more joy they find in learning another language. This issue highlights the role of the third, *Class Atmosphere*, and fourth, *Class Activities*, themes. The classroom environment, including the support from classmates and their relations, can influence students' engagement and promote learning in the classroom (Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj, 2012), which may lead to enjoyment in foreign language learning. The fourth theme also stressed the role of education and knowledge acquired

through contextualized class activities. This sort of knowledge often remains longer with the learners, who can transfer it to novel contexts and increasing their engagement and enjoyment in the L2 process.

As for the speaking anxiety in the class, the quantitative results showed a low level for this variable. However, it appeared as a distinct dimension of classroom emotion. According to the results, test anxiety and communication apprehension were perceived as dominant aspects of PSCA evidenced by their inadequate performance and anticipated anxious behaviors. Later, the qualitative results provided a better picture by revealing four major themes, setting the scene why some of the Iranian EFL learners experienced anxiety in speaking and oral tasks. One source of concern was *Exam Phobia*. Learners' experiences, teachers' observations, and the related literature (e.g., Bodie, 2010; Dewaele et al., 2019) manifest that EFL learners sometimes have test anxiety, which affects concentration and, ultimately, foreign language learning achievement negatively. The debilitating effect of exam phobia and its contribution to PSCA was evident in the data in the current study, which also finds some supporting evidence from the related literature (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). The second primary anxiety-provoking source was *Feedback/Reaction*. Based on the participants' episodes, the fear of making errors in speaking and appearing foolish in the class was an indicator of speaking anxiety. More likely, the fear of appearing inadequate or incompetent in the eyes of other students and teachers decreased their effort and affected their communication skills. As Elaldi (2016) states, any worry about making mistakes and appearing foolish before others can be an essential source of foreign language anxiety. The above-mentioned finding is consistent with the prior studies, too (e.g., Heng et al., 2012; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). The third primary source of speaking anxiety was *Personal Failure*. Speaking anxiety, as Horwitz et al. (1986) say, stems from

a fear of failure. Based on the data analysis, pressure and fear of not learning or having learned the class material (i.e., Not Learning), along with the emotional strain/tension resulting from not being well-prepared for the foreign language class (i.e., Unpreparedness) are the problems and the obstacles for L2 speaking classes, which can have an adverse effect on the L2 learning. Speaking in a foreign language can also be influenced by a lack of self-confidence, namely, the last theme. Lack of self-confidence was manifested by the feeling of nervousness due to being unfamiliar to the language class materials, subject matter, and topics of discussion, alongside tension/worry caused by an oral presentation. Less self-confident students are less likely to avoid negative attitudes and are less inclined to involve themselves in spoken activities and oral performance, resulting in more PSCA.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This research aimed primarily at gaining understanding about Iranian EFL learners' FLE and PSCA, along with characteristics and degree of enjoyment and anxiety among them. The statistical analysis revealed a moderate-to-high degree of FLE and some degree of speaking anxiety in the class. Nevertheless, the speaking anxiety that the Iranian EFL learners experienced was not high, and the degree of FLE was more than the degree of PSCA in the sample. The quantitative data analysis highlighted the interest and positive environment aspects of FLE as well as test anxiety and communication apprehension in the public speaking class. The quantitative data, in no small extent, were supported by the data in the qualitative part of the research. The qualitative results highlighted the role of such concepts and factors as the teacher, class activities, learning, and class atmosphere in FLE. In contrast, sources/factors like the exam phobia, especially oral exam phobia, feedback/reaction, personal failure, lack of self-confidence could boost PSCA.



The findings have some pedagogical implications for L2 practitioners, educators, and students. The findings imply that negative and positive emotions, such as FLE and PSCA, exist in L2 classes. Perhaps, the more important issue is the ratio of positive to negative emotions than the presence or absence of either type of emotion, such as FLE and PSCA. Thus, L2 teachers need programs to increase positive emotions such as FLE and reduce negative emotions such as PSCA in their classes. Also, the results suggest that the interesting aspect of FLE can function as the kernel of FLE and the role of L2 teachers should not go unnoticed. They can be a source of both enjoyment and speaking anxiety in the classroom. If they want to provide their students with opportunities for enjoyment to learn a foreign language, they need to reduce anxiety and develop resilience in the face of pedagogical challenges in teaching a foreign language such as English. Based on findings, interest, fun, creativity, and contentment are part of FLE. L2 teachers should learn how to trigger them in the process of teaching a foreign language and reduce tension, shyness, confusion, fear, and environmental threat in the speaking classroom. They should develop an effective lesson plan to lower the level of anxiety in the classroom to optimize L2 learning experiences. It is equally essential for them to be friendly, happy, competent, and enthusiastic about their students.

In addition to teachers' professional and emotional skills in enhancing enjoyment and lowering anxiety, L2 learners should show interest in taking part in-class activities, and this may be achieved by providing positive feedback to their peers and a stress-free environment in the own classroom to increase willingness to communicate in English. Furthermore, based on the findings, they should avoid comparing themselves and their oral performance with their classmates. This issue can be a source of speaking anxiety, especially at the time of doing oral activities. It is also crucial that classroom activities be less competitive and more enjoyable. Deficiencies in lexical

competence can be anxiety-provoking reasons. Herein, more time should be allocated to L2 lexical and pronunciation learning strategies to decrease the degree of speaking performance anxiety.

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