The Relationship Between Chinese EFL Learners' Learning Anxiety and Enjoyment in a Blended Learning Environment

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Abstract—**For the past two decades, learner psychology in relation to second language acquisition (SLA) has been a hot topic, and negative emotional variables in students' language learning have attracted a lot of attention. More recently, focus has shifted to a positive emotion, enjoyment, and its relationship with anxiety. The present mixed-method study investigated the levels of FLCA and FLE of 228 Chinese EFL learners, the correlations between the two and the sources evoking these two emotions in a blended learning environment. Considering the questionnaire's findings, participants reported relatively high levels of FLE (Mean=3.53, *SD*=.61) and low levels of FLCA (Mean=3.12, *SD*=.42). There was no significant correlation between FLCA and FLE, according to correlation analysis. Additionally, a qualitative investigation of students' emotional experiences found that FLCA was more closely tied to learner-internal factors while FLE was to the teacher. The conclusions have pedagogical ramifications for EFL teaching in China's educational system.**

Index Terms—**Chinese EFL learners, positive psychology, foreign language enjoyment, foreign language anxiety, blended learning**

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning is an emotionally and psychologically dynamic process that is influenced by a myriad of ever-changing variables and emotional "vibes" that produce moment-by-moment fluctuations in learners' adaptation (Gregersen et al., 2014). However, until the beginning of the current century, emotions were neglected, while cognitive and social perspectives received significant attention in the FL academic field. A turning point appeared in the 1970s. Dulay and Burt (1977) investigated the role of affect, especially anxiety, in language learning to find an explanation for why some students were able to obtain a high degree of language proficiency while others were not. Since then, numerous studies on emotions, primarily foreign language anxiety (FLA), have been carried out in the area of FL learning, leading to a thorough comprehension of the debilitating impact of anxiety in FL classrooms (MacIntyre, 2017).

In FL learning research, inspired by the idea of positive psychology (PosPsy), attentions to negative emotions shift to a more comprehensive perspective of both sides of the emotions. PosPsy studies: positive emotions, positive individual traits, and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Foreign language enjoyment (FLE) is one of the most studied positive feelings. Dewaele and MacIntyre conducted the first study on FLE in 2014. Since then, Dewaele and others have pursued the study of FLE and its relationship with FLA and other variables (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2017; Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele et al., 2020).

One interesting finding in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) is that the levels of FLCA and FLE of Asian learners differ significantly from those of learners in the rest of the world (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). To understand how cultural factors in China may influence the interaction between learner's internal and external variables on foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and FLE, as well as the uniqueness of classroom emotions of Chinese FL learners, Li et al. (2018) looked at these issues. Later, investigations on FLCA and FLE among Chinese non-English undergraduates and English majors were conducted (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Fang & Tang, 2021).

Regarding the Chinese educational context, one change that should be noted is the recent popularity of blended learning. The People's Republic of China's Ministry of Education stated in its most recent *Guidelines on College English Teaching* that English teachers in China's higher education should widely employ blended learning, which combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction with traditional place-based classroom methods. Blended learning has always been a hot issue in China's education. One of its benefits is that blended learning can create a favourable English learning environment (Zhang & Han, 2012; Cui, 2014; Yao, 2018).

As learner anxiety and enjoyment are two psychological factors closely related to the external learning environment (Fang & Tang, 2021), it is thus meaningful to investigate Chinese EFL learners' FLE and FLCA to explore the relationship between and to identify the primary sources of both aspects within a blended learning environment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Blended Learning

Blended learning has always been a hot topic in the educational field, especially in the post pandemic era. Garnham and Kaleta (2002) suggested that "blended learning courses are courses in which a significant portion of the learning activities have been moved online, and time traditionally spent in the classroom is reduced but not eliminated" (as cited in Liu, 2009, p.773). Rovai and Jordan (2004) point out that "a blended course can lie anywhere between the continuum anchored at opposite ends by fully face-to-face and fully online learning environments" (p.4). Quite straightforwardly, blended learning, as defined by Bonk and Graham (2012), combines face-to-face training with computer technology.

The advantages of blended learning have been thoroughly explored in numerous research and can be summed up as follows: enhanced student outcomes; higher level of autonomy and self-directed learning in learners; increased flexibility for teachers and students; personalisation; chances for professional learning; cost efficiencies; and increasing engagement between all the members (teacher and students) in the classroom (Smith & Hill, 2018).

The study of blended learning in China started at the *Seventh Conference of Chinese Application of Computer in Education* in Nanjing in 2003. Professor He Kekang from Beijing Normal University introduced blended learning into the field of China's education technology. Later, in the same year, several studies focused on inducing the theory of blended learning from abroad and explored its implications and influence on the Chinese context (Li & Zhao, 2004; Lv, 2004; Zhao, 2004). Since then, blended learning has witnessed popularity with its implementation of various forms in different levels of education in China (Zhang & Han, 2012; Cui, 2014; Zhang & Zhu, 2018).

B. Foreign Language Anxiety and Foreign Language Enjoyment

In one of his most influential articles, MacIntyre (2017) introduced the three phases of the development of language anxiety research. The first phase, known as the "Confounded Approach", produces inconsistent results since the ideas about anxiety and its effect on language learning were adopted from various sources without detailed consideration of the meaning of the anxiety concept for language learners (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). It moves to the second phase, called the "Specialised Approach", with the ground-breaking study by Horwitz et al. (1986), in which the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was constructed. According to their definition, FLCA is a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). It is related to three performance anxieties: (1) communication apprehension (difficulty in speaking in dyads or groups or public, i.e., oral communication anxiety); (2) test anxiety (a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure); and (3) fear of negative evaluation (fear of others' judgments, avoiding circumstances where judgments are made, and anticipating negative judgments from others) (Horwitz et al., 1986, p.127). The third phase is the "Dynamic Approach", which is influenced by complexity and dynamic system theory. Numerous learner factors, environmental factors, and other elements interact continuously with anxiety. The factors are specific topics being discussed, physiological reactions, linguistic abilities, interpersonal relationships, self-related appraisals, pragmatics, and the environments in which people are interacting (Sevin ç 2020).

MacIntyre (2017) pointed out that "fear and anxiety can be highly detrimental to the learning process" (as cited in Boudreau et al., 2018, p. 151). MacIntyre is neither the first nor the only one to realise that negative emotions hinder L2 learning (Schumann, 1978; Krashen, 1982; Fredrickson, 2003). However, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) introduced PosPsy into SLA, shifting exclusive attention on FLA to a more holistic view of negative and positive emotions. They argued that positive emotions encourage students to explore and take calculated risks, which strengthen social cohesiveness and have a good impact on learners' long-term resilience and toughness (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

Boudreau et al. (2018) distinguished FLE from "pleasure", a more superficial experience. They proposed that to distinguish enjoyment from pleasure, one needs to "think of pleasure as a function of conserving or maintaining needs, and enjoyment as a function of progression or challenging limits" (Boudreau et al., 2018, p153).

Although FLE was introduced as a positive counterpart to FLA in the FL classroom, Botes et al. (2020) stressed that they shouldn't be viewed as the opposites of the same emotional state because they are not the two extremes of a continuum. Instead, FLE and FLA should be seen as a learner's left and right feet, and the balance of his body can be maintained "when both feet, enjoyment and anxiety, are brought into equilibrium" (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, p. 218).

In terms of the dimensions of FLE, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) identified two subdimensions: a social subdimension and a private subdimension. Classroom laughter, shared legends, and enjoyable interactions with teachers and peers are examples of the social aspect. The private aspect includes internal sensations such as happiness, pride, and a sense of accomplishment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). According to Dewaele and Dewaele (2017), there are three components to FLE: social, private, and a peer-controlled versus teacher-controlled positive atmosphere. While examining the psychometric properties of the Chinese version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, Li et al. (2018)

proposed a new 3-factor model for FLE: FLE-Private, FLE-Teacher, and FLE-Atmosphere (Li et al., 2018). The latter classification was adopted in this study.

C. Studies on the Relationship Between FLCA and FLE

The levels of learners' FLE and FLCA and their correlation were first examined by Dewaele and MacIntyre in 2014. The FLE items (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) combined with eight items extracted from the FLCAS (Horwitz et al. 1986) was demonstrated to 1746 multilingual from all over the world. The findings demonstrated that the subjects had far more FLE than FLCA. A moderate negative correlation between FLCA and FLE with a small effect size (12.9% of variance was shared) led to the conclusion that these two are separate emotional dimensions. The dataset of this study has been reused for different research purposes: to distinguish dimensions of FLE (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016); to investigate gender differences in FLCA and FLE at the item level (Dewaele, 2016); and to investigate how multilingualism and perceived proficiency affect FLE and FLCA (Botes et al., 2020).

A pseudolongitudinal approach was employed by Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) to find out how FLCA and FLE evolved among foreign language students from various demographics in London. 189 secondary school pupils aged 12 to 18 were divided into three age groups. A negative relationship between FLCA and FLE across all three age groups was revealed in the result, with only one group showing a significant difference. This result further proved the argument that FLCA and FLE are not two ends of one continuum. Across the three age groups, FLE increased slightly with FLCA remaining static over time.

To look into how FLCA and FLE affect foreign language performance differently, Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) adopted a mixed-method approach. The participants were two different groups of students. One included 189 foreign language students from two secondary schools in London, and the other had 152 Saudi Arabians who are EFL learners and English language users. The benefit brought by FLE on students' performance was shown to be greater than the harm brought by FLCA. This finding provided excellent evidence for Dewaele et al.'s (2017) advice to improve enjoyment in the learning process rather than focusing solely on decreasing FLCA (Dewaele et al., 2017).

Dewaele et al. (2019) attempted to explore the relationship between FLCA and FLE and other teacher-centred variables within the Spanish classroom context. A moderate negative relationship between FLCA and FLE was revealed. In the cases of participants with L1 English-speaking teachers, greater levels of FLE and lower levels of FLCA were observed, while this is not the case for participants with LX English-speaking teachers.

In Dewaele et al.'s (2022) study, a novel finding was reported. In contrast to prior research that found moderately unfavourable associations between FLCA and FLE, a slight positive correlation was found between FLCA and FLE among 592 learners of Turkish as an FL in Kazakhstan. According to the findings of the study, Kazakh learners were shown higher FLE and slightly higher FLCA. The authors concluded that this result could be interpreted as a more intense emotional state that could be beneficial for learning (Dewaele et al., 2022).

Li et al. (2018) made the first attempt to investigate the FLE level of English learners in China. The authors investigated the psychometric features of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale in Chinese. The participants were 2078 Chinese high school students. The dimension FLE-Teacher received the highest score from the participants, followed by FLE-Private and FLE-Atmosphere. By analysing the qualitative data, the authors discovered that, in addition to the teacher-related and peer-related variables, an extensive range of internal and external learner variables also have an impact on an individual's experience of FLE, which is similar to the situation in other parts of the world.

Jiang and Dewaele (2019) claimed that it is essential to examine how cultural factors affect the interactions between learner-internal and learner-external variables on the FLCA and FLE of FL learners in China. Thus, they used a mixed-method technique to determine how different the FLCA and FLE of Chinese EFL learners were from learners from other countries. In their English Listening and Speaking lessons, the participants reported much higher levels of enjoyment than anxiety. The research also discovered a substantial negative relation between FLCA and FLE. FLCA was largely predicted by learner-internal variables, but FLE was mainly predicted by teacher-related variables, confirming prior research conducted outside China.

Fang and Tang (2021) discovered that English majors had much greater levels of FLE than FLCA and they experienced FLE more frequently than FLCA. It was also reported that the participants' FLE was more associated to external variables, while their FLCA was more related to internal variables, such as fear of a negative evaluation and speaking without adequate preparation.

The literature review reveals that a more comprehensive understanding of the FLE and FLCA of Chinese EFL learners needs to be further investigated in diverse circumstances. In this case, FLCA and FLE within a blended learning environment are worth exploring. The current study will look into the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the levels of FLCA/FLA and FLE of Chinese EFL learners in a blended learning environment?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the FLCA and FLE of Chinese EFL learners in a blended learning environment?

RQ3: What sources of FLCA and FLE may be detected in participants' account of enjoyable and anxious experiences in their English classes?

III. METHOD

A. Participants

The current study included 228 second-year undergraduate students (50 males and 178 females) from two provincial key universities in southwest China. The participants' average age was 19.5 years old (SD=0.7). They had been studying English for at least 6 years and had experienced blended learning since they got into the universities. All the participants were non-English majors who majored in arts, management, electronic technology, and so on. The blended learning model is mainly implemented in the *Listening and Speaking* course in this context. Although they were from two different universities, they used the same *Listening and Speaking* textbook, which is recommended by China's Education Ministry for non-English undergraduates. With the rapid development of information technology in China, hundreds of online learning sources have been provided.

B. Instruments

The questionnaire began with a demographics section, from which the above information was gathered. Then, 44 items in total on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from *strongly disagree*=1 to *strongly agree*=5) were organised to investigate the levels of the students' FLCA and FLE. The questionnaire ended with three open questions.

The first 33 items were extracted from the Chinese version of the FLCAS (Wang, 2003). This Chinese version of FLCAS has been validated. To examine English classroom anxiety, the term "外语 (foreign language)" was revised to "英语 (English)" with items related to the Chinese version of FLCAS. Three dimensions were indicated in these items: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). The Cronbach's alpha was 0.89, indicating that the adapted scale had acceptable internal consistency reliability. The remaining 11 items were extracted from the Chinese Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (CFLES), which contains 3 dimensions: FLE-Private, FLE-Teacher, and FLE-Atmosphere (Li et al., 2018). Cronbach's alpha for the CFLES was 0.826 and 0.792, 0.896, and 0.778 for each dimension, respectively, indicating high reliability within the items.

Fifty-five of the 228 participants answered the open questions. The questions are as follows: 1. What do you think of the blended English class compared to a traditional one? 2. What are the most enjoyable English learning experiences in a blended learning class? 3. What is one of your most nervous English learning experiences in a blended learning class? The first question was intended to offer supportive information for RQ1, and the second and third questions were designed to answer RQ3. These questions were written in both English and Chinese. The students could answer the questions in either English or Chinese.

C. Data Collection and Analysis

Although the blended learning approach has recently received much attention in China, not all English teachers use it. Concerning the above situation, the author purposely invited 4 teachers from two universities who are conducting a BL approach to help with the study.

The data collection proceeded in two phases. First, the questionnaire was organised by Wen Juan Xing (an online platform for designing and distributing questionnaires) and a QR code was generated. In class, the students were informed of the purpose of the investigation, and then their teachers showed the QR code to the whole class. Students voluntarily finished the questionnaire by scanning the QR code. The questionnaire remained online for one month. The questionnaire was anonymous.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 served as a tool to analyse the quantitative survey data. The calculation of Q-Q plots showed that the data are non-normally distributed (see Figures 1 and 2). The skewness and kurtosis values confirmed the above conclusion (see Tables 1 and 2). Then, Spearman correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between FLCA and FLE.
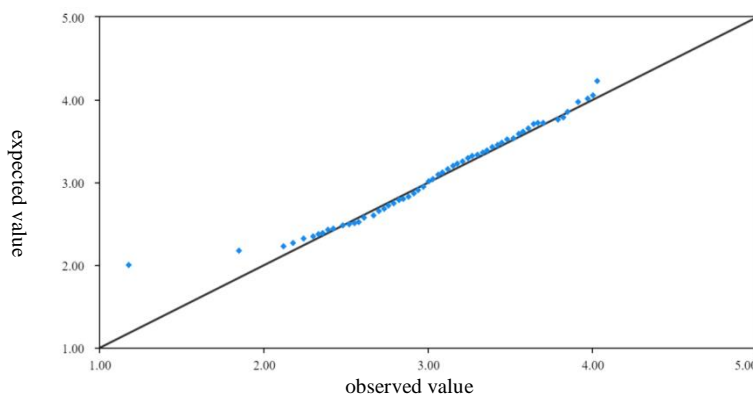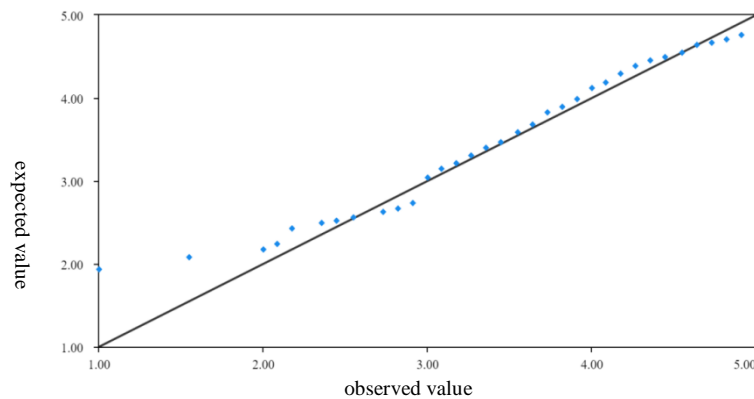

Figure 1 Normal Q-Q Plot of FLCA

Figure 2 Normal Q-Q Plot of FLE

TABLE 1
TEST OF NORMALITY OF FLCA

	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov–Smirnov test	
						Statistic	p
FLCA	228	3.116	0.423	-0.478	1.799	0.065	0.020*

** p<0.05 ** p<0.01*

TABLE 2
TEST OF NORMALITY OF FLE

	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov–Smirnov test	
						Statistic	p
FLE	228	3.530	0.610	-0.302	1.456	0.096	0.000**

** p<0.05 ** p<0.01*

NVivo 11 software was used to analyse qualitative data in the second phase. Fifty-five students answered the open questions, with 25 responding to the questions in English and the rest responding in Chinese. The coding approaches of Jiang and Dewaele (2019) and Horwitz et al. (1986) were employed in this study. For FLE, the transcriptions were divided into three major categories: "FLE-self", "FLE-teacher", and "FLE-peer". FLE-self is defined as no other person, but the participant him/herself is mentioned as the cause of the emotion. The second category, FLE-teacher, identifies the instructor as the primary cause of the feelings. The third group is FLE-peers, which denotes that the emotions are specifically brought on by other peers' acts or interactions with other peers. The three main categories for FLCA are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. As some descriptions touched upon multiple themes, there was some overlapping coding.

IV. RESULTS

RQ1: What are the levels of FLCA/FLA and FLE of Chinese EFL learners?

Tables 3 and 4 show that the mean levels for FLCA and FLE were 3.12 (SD=.42) and 3.53 (SD=.61) respectively. These means are within the range of FLCA and FLE values from earlier investigations (see Table 5).

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FLE

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
FLE	228	1.00	5.00	3.53	0.61

TABLE 4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FLCA

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
FLCA	228	1.18	4.15	3.12	0.42

TABLE 5
COMPARISON OF VALUES OF FLCA AND FLE IN THE PRESENT STUDY WITH THE PREVIOUS ONES

	Present study	DM 14	LJD 18	JD 19	FT 21
FLE	3.53	3.8	3.12	3.94	3.4
FLCA	3.12	2.8	/	3.14	3.12

DM14: Dewaele and MacIntyre 2014; LJD 18: Li, et al. 2018; Jiang and Dewaele 2019; FT 21: Fang and Tang 2021

RQ2: What is the relationship between the FLCA and FLE of Chinese EFL learners?

TABLE 6
SPEARMAN'S CORRELATION ANALYSIS

	FLCA
FLE	-0.053

* P<0.05 ** P<0.01

Spearman's correlation revealed no correlation between FLCA and FLE of Chinese EFL learners, which once again confirms the findings of previous research (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2017; Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Dewaele et al., 2019).

RQ3: What sources of FLCA and FLE may be detected in participants' account of enjoyable and anxious experiences in the blended English classes?

To answer RQ3, the author conducted a qualitative analysis of the data collected by the open questions on the most enjoyable/anxious experiences in the blended English classes. Tables 7 and 8 provide a summary of the sources for these categories as well as the total number of tokens under each source.

TABLE 7
THREE CATEGORIES OF FLE AND THE NUMBER OF TOKENS IN THE ACCOUNT OF 55 PARTICIPANTS ON
ENJOYABLE EEXPERIENCES

Category	FLE-self	FLE-teacher	FLE-peer
number of tokens	22	26	11

Table 7 demonstrates participants' FLE is more connected with the FLE-teacher and FLE-self categories. Teacher recognition was most frequently mentioned among the participants, for example:

Extract 1

I felt most pleasant when I was praised by the teacher.

Among the FLE-self category, the realisation of progress was mentioned most frequently, accounting for 84% of the 22 tokens. Among the FLE-peer categories, peer interaction was the only one indicated as a source of enjoyment. The evidence can be obtained from the following description of the participant's enjoyable interaction with his classmates.

Extract 2

In the English class, I really enjoyed exchanging thoughts with my classmates because it can broaden my view and enrich my knowledge. What's more, I can remember some new English words and phrases while talking with others.

TABLE 8
THREE CATEGORIES OF FLCA AND THE NUMBER OF TOKENS IN THE ACCOUNT OF 55 PARTICIPANTS ON ANXIOUS EXPERIENCES

Category	Communication apprehension	Test anxiety	Fear of negative evaluation
number of tokens	55	0	0

As shown in Table 8, participants' FLE is exclusively related to communication apprehension with multiple manifestations, such as teacher questioning (26), receiver anxiety in the listening tasks (22), and speaking in front of the class (10). For example:

Extract 3

I felt so nervous while I couldn't get the speaker's idea in the listening materials.

Extract 4

I felt so nervous as my teacher asked me to answer some questions.

V. DISCUSSION

From the result of the first question, it is reported that the participants experienced a relatively higher level of FLE than that of FLCA in a blended English learning class. This supports the conclusions of earlier research. It can be easily noted (see Table 5) that participants in the current study reported FLE levels that were lower than those of Jiang and Dewaele (2019), who also investigated non-English majors in China. This may be due to the different levels of English proficiency between the participants of the two studies. As mentioned in the limitations section, Jiang and Dewaele (2019) point out that the participants of their study were from a prominent Chinese university and had a relatively good command of English. Consequently, their conclusions cannot be applied to all Chinese universities.

On the other hand, comparing the results from Li et al.'s (2018) and Fang and Tang's (2021) studies, the participants in the present study reported higher levels of FLE. While describing the differences between a blended English learning class and a traditional one (English classes in most high schools in China), all of the participants expressed a preference for the blended learning model. Many of them mentioned the benefits of online learning, such as offering them enough time and various sources for better preparation for offline classes (the original transcriptions were translated from Chinese into English by the author):

Extract 5

Online English classes can effectively arise my interest in learning English with so many choices of learning materials. It can also help me review and consolidate my knowledge. As a result, I can participate more in the offline classes with good preparations.

Extract 6

There is more time for free learning. I can learn according to my own pace and my own schedule. Sometimes I would learn something again and again until I could completely understand it.

Based on the above account, it can be concluded that a blended learning environment can contribute to the improvement of Chinese EFL learners' FLE.

The second research question dealt with the correlation between FLCA and FLE of Chinese non-English major EFL learners. The results of Spearman's correlation analysis showed that no correlation existed between the participants' FLCA and FLE, which confirms the results of earlier investigations (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Li et al., 2018; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Fang & Tang, 2021). This further supports the claim that FLCA and FLE do not reflect opposite extremities of a single continuum of classroom emotions (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). According to this, Chinese learners may have higher FLE and lower FLCA. Meanwhile, there may be a possibility that students experience both high FLCA and FLE or neither.

The third question focused on the sources of the FLCA and FLE of participants' account in the blended English classes. The primary contributor to FLE experiences was cited as the teacher. In contrast, the sources of FLCA mainly related to learner-internal variables, such as fear of speaking English in public or listening to a spoken message. These results support the idea that whereas FLE is more dependent on circumstance and connected to teacher and peer behaviour as well as interactions between all parties, FLCA is more learner-driven (Dewaele et al., 2018).

It makes sense, with the result of all 55 participants showing communication apprehension in their English classes. First, most Chinese students are poor performers in the productive skills of English, while they can be pretty impressive in written examinations. The participants in this study experienced blended learning in the English Listening and Speaking course. Like most Chinese EFL learners, they rarely had opportunities to speak English before they got into universities. Additionally, insufficient exposure to the target language has a significant influence on their listening and speaking abilities.

VI. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The findings of this study have educational importance for Chinese universities' English teachers. Instead of overly focusing on eliminating FLCA, teachers should focus on creating an enjoyable English learning environment.

The first contribution of this study has been to confirm that blended learning should be widely implemented in foreign language teaching in China. Regardless of its implementation design, blended learning has been proven to significantly improve language teaching and learning (Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). When online sessions were added to conventional classes, students not only learned more, but also interacted with each other more actively. Besides that, blended learning also provided flexibility to students and enhanced feedback time (Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). Students can be well prepared before class. As a result, the anxiety associated with insufficient preparation can be reduced. With sufficient preparation, students' confidence will be grown while their FLCA will be alleviated to a certain extent.

Second, this study contributes to existing knowledge of the crucial role of the teacher in provoking students' pleasant feelings (Dewaele et al., 2018; Liu & Guo, 2021). Teachers are expected to be friendly, humorous and supportive. A friendly learning environment can be built with the positive impact of a teacher's good personality, which also can help reduce students' anxieties related to the fear of negative evaluation. Although Dewaele (2015) strongly pleaded that teachers need the freedom to do unexpected, challenging, and humorous things and he sees routine as a classroom killer. Nevertheless, in China's context, teachers do have to follow some routines. It is safe and efficient for teachers to arrange innovative and enjoyable activities which correspond to learners' interests and their language proficiency levels (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019).

Third, it is well established from a variety of studies that positive group dynamics have measurable positive effects (Dörnyei & Muir, 2019). Teachers can build a healthy learning environment by promoting acceptance and cohesiveness within a class group. Some of the main factors listed by Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) are as follows:

1. Learning about each other: By sharing personal information with each other, the relationship between members can be quickly established.

2. Shared group history: It represents the time students spent with each other, which can create a bonding effect among them.

3. The rewarding nature of group activities: It includes the enjoyment of participating in the activities, achievement of these goals, approval of the goals and personal benefits.

4. Group legend: Successful groups frequently develop a type of group mythology, which includes naming the group, generating specific group traits (such as a slogan), and partaking in group rituals, as well as developing group mottoes, logos, and other symbols.

5. Cooperation towards common goals: The most effective way to bring group members together is cooperation toward common goals. It has been well proven that even hostile parties can work with each other under such circumstances.

6. Teacher role modelling: Students always prefer friendly and supportive teachers.

Fourth, teachers shouldn't have to follow rigid rules and a uniform curriculum that restricts their ability to be creative, which has been realised in a blended learning environment. It is suggested that teachers should offer more freedom in language assessment, which means that the forms of language assessment can be diverse and more formative than summative. In this case, as the forms of language assessment are diverse in a blended learning class, test anxiety can be eliminated for most students.

With regard to the research design, some limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the sample size is relatively small compared with other studies. Future research could investigate participants from different levels of education as it targets EFL learners, not just university students. Second, as Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) noted, emotions are dynamic in nature and so do the causes of positive and negative emotions and their relationships. It is recommended that further research be undertaken to examine the longitudinal changes in positive emotions and negative emotions in the foreign language learning classroom.

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