

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENJOYMENT AND GENDER AMONG SECONDARY GRAMMAR SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The aim of the present article was to examine the influence of foreign language enjoyment on learning English as a FL, as well as to investigate this relationship from the perspective of gender.

Methods. The informants in the study were students of five secondary grammar schools located in south-western Poland. To compute the obtained data, the statistical program STATISTICA was used. Standard descriptive and inferential statistics were used to report means, median and standard deviation for sociodemographic and baseline characteristics of the sample. The t-Test and ANOVA were used to show mean differences in score data. A series of Pearson's correlational analyses was carried out to verify the relationships between different types of FLE, academic achievement and sources of FLE.

Results. The results of this study revealed that there are no statistically significant differences between males and females in FLE, while such differences are found in terms of the sources of FLE each gender perceives as the most crucial ones. It has been proved that FLE increases with the level of students' proficiency, and a high level of FLE results in students' greater academic achievement.

Conclusion. Although there were many researches concerning gender differences in the context of SLA, none of them has been explicitly addressed to explore the differences between males and females in FLE. Contrary to expectations, however, the results of this study revealed that gender does not seem to determine FLE experienced by the students to a greater extent.

Key words: foreign language enjoyment, learning enjoyment, SLA, gender differences, positive emotions, secondary school students

INTRODUCTION

Applied linguistics and psychology have started to follow converging paths during recent years, treating the emotional system of a language learner equally to his/her cognitive and motivational one (Dorneyi, 2009). Consequently, the research on affect and emotions has been vibrant in the second language acquisition studies and a great deal of effort is constantly put into

researching what emotions, and to what extent, either facilitate language learning or impede this process. With the main focus being placed on the role of negative emotions within the foreign language classroom, such as language anxiety, the area of positive emotions contributing to effective FL learning has been largely neglected (Dewaele, et al., 2017). This comes as a slight disappointment, as it seems to be equally important to decrease the level of negative emotions, which hinder the comprehensible input from reaching the part of the brain responsible for second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982) and thus, hamper student's progress in L2, as it is to increase the level of positive emotions that may expand the acquisition of adaptive knowledge (Fredrickson, 2001) and therefore, greatly facilitate language learning.

For that reason, the present study aims to enrich our understanding of foreign language enjoyment (FLE), a positive affective factor which was introduced into the field of SLA only a few years ago and is undeniably a concept in need of further investigation. The main objective of the study, however, is to investigate the relationship between FLE and gender, that is, to answer the question whether or not there is a difference between male and female learners in the level of FLE they experience. Although there were many researches concerning gender differences in the SLA context, none of them has been explicitly addressed to explore the differences between males and females in FLE. In terms of learning enjoyment, the research thus far has pointed at females to be the group of learners for whom learning is a more enjoyable experience (Goetz, et al., 2008; Radwan, 2014). However, having such a limited amount of information about the enjoyment in terms of learning a foreign language, it is difficult to unequivocally assume that girls have a higher level of FLE than boys. Thus, the purpose of this study is not to confirm the alleged hypothesis which group of learners has a superiority in FLE over the other but to investigate how males and females differ in terms of FLE, what are the factors triggering enjoyment for the two groups, and finally, how enjoyment influences students' educational outcome in learning English as a FL. Further, as no previous study has investigated the role of FLE within the Polish educational context, the present study seeks to obtain data that would help to address the research gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON ENJOYMENT

Foreign language enjoyment has been conceptualised as "a complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of challenge and perceived ability that reflect human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks" (Dewaele, & MacIntyre, 2016, p. 216). The quoted definition of FLE is, unfortunately, the only one that has been offered thus far. Therefore, if we want to fully understand the concept of FLE, we need to rely on what we know about learning enjoyment in general, and then apply this knowledge to the foreign language environment.

Perceived as an activity focused positive achievement emotion (Pekrun, et al., 2007), enjoyment is the feeling of excitement while taking on a new and puz-

zling task, which arouses student's curiosity and generates interest (Ainley, & Hidi, 2013). Thus, FLE might be regarded as a spontaneous joy derived from participation in a novel and challenging foreign language activity.

According to the flow theory by Csikszentmihalyi's (2004), enjoyment does not only concern the satisfaction of physical needs but, above all, it encompasses the satisfaction of mental needs of a learner. It is triggered once a person is confronted with a novel and demanding activity, called an optimal challenge. The optimal challenge arouses learners' curiosity and at the same time requires from them an increased attention and a slightly greater effort than the previous task they were faced with. Therefore, the activity should not be too easy, as it would lead to boredom, nor to difficult, as it might result in an increased level of anxiety. Only such an activity may deeply immerse a student in a FL activity, leading to a heightened attention span and more efficient learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). Once a learner's attention is heightened, there is an increased activity of the cerebral cortex, all information processes speed up, which, in turn, leads to more efficient work, and more effective learning. Satisfactory results and overcoming challenges in language learning may lead to an affective state of pleasure, called enjoyment, and thereby, play the role of internal motivation to further learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004; Fredrickson, 2001; Deweale, et al., 2017).

Turning now to the relationship between enjoyment and academic performance, the research points to a positive, direct association between the experience of enjoyment, academic achievement, and students' attitude to learn (Goetz, et al., 2008; Villavicencio, & Bernardo, 2012; Hagenauer, & Hascher, 2014). Enjoyment coincides also with stronger and more enduring effort and involvement in a given subject (Lucardie, 2014; Al-Shara, 2015). It is a strong motivator (Villavicencio, & Bernardo, 2012; Lucardie, 2014) and tends to predominate boredom in the classroom (Gonzales, 2013).

It is now time to focus on the proper concept of the present paper, that is, on the role of FLE within the educational context. The pioneering research on FLE was carried out by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), who investigated the relationship between the foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and FLE in the process of learning a FL. For the needs of the study, the authors created the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, which to date is the only instrument to measure the level of FLE experienced by the students. The results of the study indicated that enjoyment was more frequently experienced in the classroom than anxiety and those respondents who scored a higher level of FLE, got lower scores of FLCA. Further, FLE increased with students mastery in a FL and had a tendency to increase for the pupils in older learning groups. Regarding gender differences, females scored higher for both FLCA and FLE, which indicates that females tend to experience more intense emotions while learning a FL than their male peers, both positive and negative ones.

In 2017, Dewaele et al. conducted a second remarkable piece of research on the relationship between enjoyment and anxiety, whose aim was to investigate to what extent these two emotions are connected with two types of variables, that is, learner-internal and teacher-specific ones. Similar to the previous study

on FLE (Dewaele, et al., 2014), the results revealed that the more advanced the students were, the more enjoyment while learning a FL they experienced. Regarding gender differences, girls reported both more FLCA and more FLE than boys, which further supports the idea of female learners being more emotionally involved in the FL learning and experiencing more emotional highs and lows than males. The attitude towards the foreign language was found to have a significant effect both on FLE and FLCA. Regarding the teacher-specific variables, the results indicated that the predictability of the teacher has no effect on FLCA, but a significant negative effect on FLE. Finally, the results revealed that the level of FLCA was less related to FL teachers and their practices than FLE. Thus, the authors suggest, foreign language teachers should be less concerned about students FLCA and more focused on boosting students' FLE.

Taken as a whole, foreign language enjoyment is a desirable emotion, which operates as a driving force for the FL learning process. It results in a high academic achievement, boosts motivation, and may play a protective function against negative emotions (MacIntyre, 2017). For that reason, FLE might be the requisite for all learners to unlock their full foreign language potential. In this sense, it can and should be treated as a legitimate, multipurpose 'tool' facilitating language learning and its role cannot be underestimated.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE CLASSROOM

Discussing gender differences in terms of emotional experiences, it is believed that female learners experience more emotional highs and lows while learning than their male peers. Females are believed to display a higher level of both positive and negative emotions than males, such as happiness, surprise, distress, anxiety, embarrassment, guilt and shame (Else-Quest, et al., 2012). Males, in turn, are labelled as those who experience a higher level of anger than women and tend to be excessively proud of their achievements (Plant, et al., 2000; in Else-Quest, et al., 2012).

Investigating differences between males and females in implicit and explicit personality traits, Vianello et al. (2013) found that females experience significantly higher levels of extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and vulnerability than men, who are more assertive, risk-taking, open to experience and excitement seekers.

This heightened emotionality of the female learners may have two facets. On the one hand, it would be reasonable to believe that women have great difficulties in foreign language learning since they experience a higher level of negative emotions while learning a FL than males, such as guilt or anxiety. On the other hand, however, the females' increased emotionality and sensitivity to both positive and negative emotions might actually boost the acquisition and use of the FL (Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau, & Dewaele, 2016). This observation seems to be in line with what is known about the impact of gender on the attainment in learning English as a FL.

Research results indicate that there is a general tendency for girls to outperform boys in a FL and to achieve higher grades and mean scores on general English proficiency tests (Lopez, 2006; Driessen, & van Langen, 2013; Matějů, & Smith, 2015). What is more, girls' individual skills of reading, writing, speaking, or listening, are at a higher level than those of boys (Główka, 2014; Walczak, & Geranpayeh, 2015). Finally, females enjoy language learning significantly more than males (Radwan, 2014).

As to the academic performance, the dissimilarities between males and females are also found in terms of attribution orientation (Else-Quest, et al., 2012) and motivation (Daif-Allah, 2012; Lopez, 2006). Women are more interactively and socially oriented than men who tend to be instrumentally motivated (Daif-Allah, 2012). Thus, in the context of foreign language learning, females, compared to male learners, may derive greater satisfaction and joy from being involved in activities aimed at strengthening social bonds, while males would learn a language more eagerly for more practical reasons.

Having presented major gender differences in the context of foreign language learning, it is now time to link the two concepts of this paper, that is, foreign language enjoyment and gender. It is crucial to emphasise that none of the previous research in the field has investigated such a relationship. However, from what has been already stated, it seems right to presume that the level of foreign language enjoyment will differ for women and men, as the experience of emotions is generally seen as an individual issue grounded biologically. It is reasonable to believe that women will have a higher level of FLE than boys, as female experience more intense emotions while learning a language than male learners and have better academic achievement in L2. These results may indicate that female learners are more probable to experience a higher level of FLE than men. It is crucial to mention, however, that male students might be also likely to experience a high level of FLE as they are more open to experience, taking up new challenges in learning, and seeking excitement in learning (Vianello, et al., 2013). Further, they put a great emphasis on the teacher's relaxed attitude and sense of humor (Lavin, 2012), all factors being fundamental in order to experience enjoyment.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between foreign language enjoyment and gender among secondary grammar school students in Poland. Although there are many researches concerning gender differences in the context of SLA, none of them has been explicitly addressed to explore the differences between female and male students in FLE. Thus, instead of putting forward the research hypotheses assuming that one of the group would have a superiority in FLE over the other, the researcher formulated the following research question:

RQ1: What are the differences between male and female secondary school students in the FLE experience?

The secondary objective of the research aimed to examine the relationship between foreign language enjoyment and students' proficiency in English. The remaining research questions were as follows:

RQ2: How does the level of FLE change with the level of students' proficiency and the class they attend?

RQ3: What is the relationship between students' Learning Enjoyment and FLE?

PARTICIPANTS

The informants in the study were students of five secondary grammar schools located in south-western Poland. There were 233 participants (146 girls and 87 boys). The average age of the respondents was 17.2 years, with a minimum of 16 and a maximum of 19. It is crucial to mention, however, that the number of 19-year-old pupils was not sufficient to be included in further analysis. Nearly half of them (47.2%) lived in a town (between 2,500 and 50,000 citizens), 39.5% lived in a village (up to 2,500 citizens) and the remaining group lived in the city (over 50,000 citizens). All the participants learnt English as a foreign language as a part of the school curriculum and they had at least 3 hours of English instruction per week. Nearly one-fourth of respondents (24%) attended additional English classes outside the school (33 girls and 22 boys). As other compulsory foreign languages, the participants studied German, Spanish or French. As to the length of English language experience, a vast majority (90.6%) of respondents had been learning English for more than 6 years. Of the 233 participants who completed the questionnaire, 82% claimed that they liked foreign languages. When it comes to the participants' proficiency in English, there were 40 beginners (19 females and 21 males); 65 students' at a pre-intermediate level (44 females and 21 males); 79 at intermediate (56 females and 23 males); and finally 49 at an upper-intermediate level (27 females and 22 males).

THE INSTRUMENT

The main instrument of the study was a web-questionnaire, which consisted of several parts. In the first one, the participants were asked about their sociodemographic information, such as gender, age, parents' education, place of residence, school and the class they attended. They were also asked about the grades they received in English at the end of the previous semester, year and the one they forecast to get at the end of the upcoming semester. The three grades were later on aggregated and their mean served as one of the variables in the study (Students' Grades). Participants evaluated also their skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking; the average of the four skills was later named Students' Self-Report.

The following part of the questionnaire included the Learning Enjoyment Scale (Pekrun, et al., 2002) that measures the level of learning-related enjoyment in general, without indicating any specific subject. The scale consisted of 10 positively-phrased items which pertain to feelings one may experience before learning (e.g. "I look forward to studying"), during learning (e.g. "I get physically excited when my studies are going well," "When my studies are going well, it gives me a rush"), and after learning (e.g. "Certain subjects are so enjoyable that I am motivated to do extra reading about them"). Those items were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 - Definitely do not agree to 5 - Definitely agree.

The Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (Dewaele, & MacIntyre, 2014) was included in the next part of the questionnaire. The aim of this scale was to assess the degree to which the FL learning, in case of this study - English, is enjoyable for students. The questions were connected with feeling associated with members of a FL group (e.g. "The peers are nice," "We form a tight group"), a FL teacher ("The teacher is encouraging," "The teacher is supportive") and the atmosphere in the classroom. The rest of the questions were connected with how an individual feels during the very process of FL learning (e.g. "I don't get bored," "It's fun", "I enjoy it"). There were 21 items on the scale and all of them were phrased positively. The responses were given on standard 5-point Likert scale (1- definitely do not agree to 5 - definitely agree).

There was also 9-item scale created for the purpose of the study. It was based on Pekrun's (2002) Learning Enjoyment Scale, however adopted to English learning environment (e.g. "I look forward English classes," "Reflecting on my progress in English makes me happy," "I get physically excited when my English is going well"). Those items were evaluated on a 5-point scale (1- Definitely do not agree, 5- Definitely agree). For the needs of this study, this scale has been given a name: the Foreign Language Learning Enjoyment Scale (FL LE Scale). This scale measured language enjoyment on a slightly different level than the FLE scale, that is to say, enjoyment experienced before English lesson, during studying English, and after having finished English lesson. In contrast to the FLE Scale, all items were formulated in the first person singular, so they described more precisely the level of enjoyment that one experiences as a single member of a class distinct from a learning group. The majority of questions concerned an individual realisation of progress in English (e.g. "I like learning English so much that I learn more than is expected from me"). The scale's reliability was measured in terms of the Cronbach's alpha and the result was $\alpha = .90$.

The final part of the questionnaire aimed at assessing the sources of foreign language enjoyment. The participants were provided with the list of 9 sources of enjoyment (e.g. the teacher's attitude, atmosphere in the classroom, relationships with peers, challenging material, learning real-life language) and they were asked to point to at least 1 and at most 3 aspects which in their opinion have the greatest impact on their enjoyment experience. Later on, each aspect

was to be assessed on a 5- item Likert scale to obtain more detailed results (1- does not influence at all, 5- greatly influences). Students had also an opportunity to suggest their own source of enjoyment which was not listed in the questionnaire.

PROCEDURE

Data collection lasted three weeks. The headmaster's permission to carry out the study was received in two secondary schools, which constitutes the majority of a research sample (64.3%). The rest of respondents (35.7%) filled out the web-questionnaire voluntarily at home. Prior to completing the questionnaire, students received instruction to make certain that they understood all its parts correctly.

ANALYSES

To compute the obtained data, the statistical program STATISTICA was used. Standard descriptive and inferential statistics were used to report means (arithmetic average), median (the median value that separates the lower half of the data from the higher part) and standard deviation (SD) for sociodemographic and baseline characteristics of the sample. The t-Test, as well as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to show mean differences in score data. The results obtained are presented in the subsection that follows.

RESEARCH RESULTS

To be able to analyse the results and draw conclusions, each finding was first depicted by means of the descriptive statistics and then followed by inferential statistics.

The table below shows the means and standard deviation of the three groups, that is to say, all participants, females and males. The results of the student's t-test demonstrated that there are no statistically significant differences between males and females in their self-report, foreign language enjoyment (FLE), learning enjoyment (LE), and foreign language learning enjoyment (FL LE), while such a difference can be identified between the male and the female groups in a case of their grades.

Table 1. Means, SD and t-test in Grades, Self- Report, FLE, LE and FL LE males and females in the whole sample (N = 233)

	All (N=233)		Females (N=146)		Males (N=87)		T
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Grades	4.13	0.94	4.23	0.83	3.98	1.08	2.02
Self-report	3.80	1.02	3.80	0.96	3.80	1.11	0.009
FLE	3.56	0.74	3.51	0.74	3.62	0.74	-1.01*
LE	3.68	0.72	3.69	0.70	3.66	0.75	0.34*
FL LE	3.57	0.84	3.57	0.86	3.57	0.82	-0.03*

* p < 0.01

As shown in the table above, the average grade of all the participants was M=4.13 and it was significantly higher for women (M=4.23) than for men (M=3.98). When it comes to Learning Enjoyment, the mean of all participants was M=3.68. Regarding gender, the results were as follows: females' mean of Learning Enjoyment was equal M=3.69 and males' M=3.66. As assumed, women had a slightly higher level of Learning Enjoyment than their male peers. However, the difference was not statistically significant.

The results indicated that males and females virtually do not differ in any way in terms of their Self-report. Surprisingly, the results showed that males had a higher level of Foreign Language Enjoyment than females. The mean of FLE for males was M=3.62, and for females M=3.51. Once again, this difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be said that there is no statistical difference between the two groups as to the enjoyment experience, whether it is Learning Enjoyment, Foreign Language Enjoyment or Foreign Language Learning Enjoyment.

Since the aforementioned results indicated a substantial difference between males and females in their grades, it was crucial to examine the relationship between the participants' grades and their level of FLE. For that reason, a series of Pearson's correlational analyses was carried out. The results obtained revealed a positive correlation between the participants' grades and their level of FLE ($r = .44, p < 0.05$). The correlation was nearly at the same level for women ($r = .46, p < 0.05$) and men ($r = .45, p < 0.05$), which is more evidence to believe that there are no major gender differences in this aspect of enjoyment. In the case of the second type of enjoyment measured in this study, Foreign Language Learning Enjoyment, the situation was alike. That is to say, the higher the average grade was, the higher was the level of FL LE. The correlation was stronger for males ($r = .55, p < 0.05$) than for females ($r = .44, p < 0.05$).

In order to answer the third research question (RQ3), the correlation between Learning Enjoyment and FLE has been investigated. The results revealed significant positive correlation between learning enjoyment and FLE ($r = .49, p < 0.05$) and even more significant in case of FL LE ($r = .63, p < 0.05$). In general, it can be stated that the level of FLE increases with a growth of learning enjoyment. The Table 2 below summarises these results.

Table 2. Pearson's correlations between students' Grades, LE, FLE and FL LE in the whole sample (N=233)

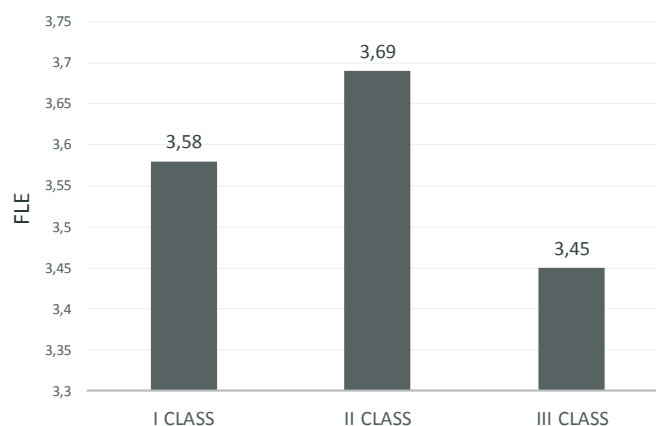
	Grades	Learning Enjoyment
Foreign Learning Enjoyment	.44*	.49*
Learning Enjoyment	.40*	
Foreign Language Learning Enjoyment	.48*	.63*

*p < 0.05

As indicated in the table above, the most notable correlation was found between the participants' Learning Enjoyment and their Foreign Language Enjoyment and there are valid reasons to believe that these two concepts are inextricably intertwined with each other.

The second research question (RQ2) was focused on how the level of FLE changes with the class students attendance and their proficiency in English. With regard to the participants' class, the mean scores on FLE were as follows: the first-graders M=3.58, the second-graders M=3.69; and the third-graders M=3.45. The results revealed significant increase in FLE from the first to the second class of a secondary school and a dramatic drop in FLE in the third class. Figure 1. shows a visual representation of the data.

Figure 1. Average of FLE and the class students attend



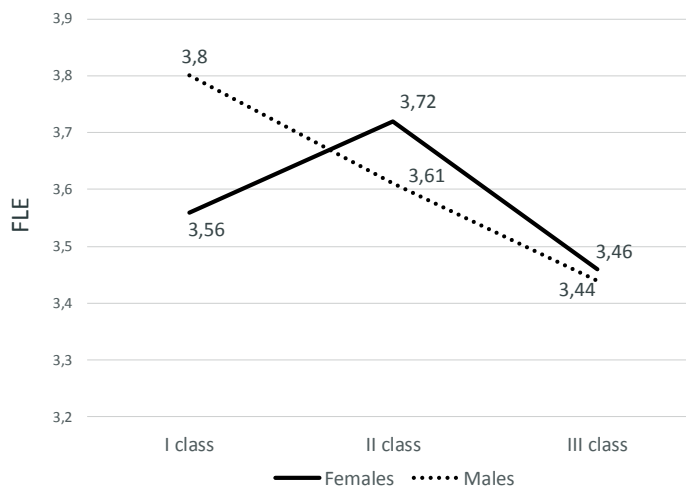
As shown on Figure 1., the group of students attending the third class of a secondary school reported a significantly lower level of FLE than the two remaining groups.

It is crucial now to take a closer look into these results and analyse them separately for the Male and the Female group. The results were as follows: the mean in FLE for females attending the first class was M=3.56, SD=0.89, and for males M=3.80, SD=0.59. In a case of the participants' in the second class, females' mean was equal M=3.72, SD=0.62 and males' M=3.61, SD=0.79. In the

third class, the results were the following: M=3.46, SD=0.71 for women, and M=3.44, SD=0.86 for men.

The mean scores for males and females in each class were firstly compared by means of the one-way ANOVA procedure and then followed by a Duncan Multiple Range Test (MRT) to identify the pairs of means that were different. The results revealed that the only statistically significant difference in FLE mean was found between the Female and the Male group attending the first class of the secondary school. Figure 2. shows a visual representation of the data.

Figure 2. The level of FLE for Males (N= 87) and Females (N=147) according to the class they attend



One more interesting finding that can be depicted from the figure above is that there is a clear tendency for FLE to decrease from the second to the third class of the secondary school, regardless of the participants' gender. A possible explanation for these results will be provided in the following part of this article.

With regard to students' proficiency in English (RQ2), not surprisingly, a positive correlation was found between students' proficiency and FLE level ($r = .49, p < 0.05$). It means that when the level of proficiency increased, the level of FLE increased as well. For females the correlation was stronger than for males (females: $r = .55, p < 0.05$; males: $r = .41, p < 0.05$). When it comes to the mean in FLE for each of the group the results were the following: the pre-intermediate students had a higher level of FLE (M=3.33) than beginners (M=2.96) but a lower level of FLE than the intermediate students (M=3.77). The intermediate students, in turn, had a higher level of FLE than the pre-intermediate but lower than the upper-intermediate students (M=3.99).

The Tukey's HSD test for unequal sample sizes provided specific information on which means obtained in the four groups: beginners (N=40), pre-intermediate (N=65), intermediate (N=79) and upper-intermediate (N=49) were

significantly different from one another. The results of the Tukey post-hoc test showed a significant difference in the FLE means of all the four groups, apart from the comparison between the intermediate and upper intermediate group. The table below (Table 3) represents the results in a greater detail.

Table 3. Post-hoc comparison using Tukey's HDS. Mean differences in FLE between proficiency groups

	1 (M=2.95)	2 (M=3.33)	3 (M=3.77)	4 (M=3.99)
1 <i>Beginners</i> (N=40)		0.02*	0.00*	0.00*
2 <i>Pre-Intermediate</i> (N=65)			0.00*	0.00*
3 <i>Intermediate</i> (N=79)				0.27**
4 <i>Upper-Intermediate</i> (N=49)				

*p<0.05 **p>0.05

The sources of enjoyment were investigated on two levels. First, the respondents were provided with a list of eight factors out of which they had to choose three which, in their opinion, had the greatest influence on their enjoyment. Despite having the opportunity to add an additional source of enjoyment, none of the respondents did it. A few respondents did not point to any factor, or wrote that nothing was enjoyable for them while learning English. As it turned out in a subsequent analysis, those were the students with a very low level of FLE (Mean in FLE was lower than 3.0; $M < 3.0$).

The results revealed that 165 respondents (70.5% of the research sample) indicated the possibility of an authentic use of English as one of three the most important factors influencing their language enjoyment. Teacher attitude was in second place with 121 respondents (51.7%). The third in importance for the participants was the possibility of self-development (N=107, 45.7%), and the fourth, an interesting lesson content (N=104, 44.4%).

Contrary to expectations, the relationship with peers (good atmosphere in the classroom) was only at the fifth position (N=77, 32.9%). The least significant in students' opinion were specific classroom activities, such as games and role plays (N=28, 12%). In the following part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to assess the given factors on a 5-item Likert scale. This enabled the researcher to calculate the correlation between every factor and the level of FLE. It was done by the means of the Pearson correlational analysis. In the case of the female participants, the strongest positive correlations with FLE had the following factors: 1. possibility for self-development ($r = .59$, $p < 0.05$); 2. doing demanding activities ($r = .44$, $p < 0.05$); 3. authentic use of language ($r = .42$, $p < 0.05$). As it comes to the male participants, the results were as follows: the highest positive correlation with FLE had the authentic use of language ($r = .42$, $p < 0.05$); the second was the teacher's sense of humour ($r = .40$, $p < 0.05$), and the third one, interesting topic of the lesson ($r = .38$, $p < 0.05$). Regardless of gender, the weakest correlation was found between games and role-plays and FLE. These results are summarised and presented in more detail in the table below.

Table 4. Correlation between FLE and the sources of enjoyment (N=233)

		Self-devel- opment	Demand- ing activities	Authentic use of English	Inter- esting topic	Les- son's content	Sense of hu- mour	Games/ Play roles
FLE	Females (N=146)	.59*	.44*	.42*	.40*	.39*	.39*	.37*
	Males (N=97)	.37*	.33*	.42*	.38*	.38*	.40*	.10*

*p<0.05

Before proceeding to discuss the results obtained on foreign language enjoyment and gender, it is crucial to allude to one more finding. In response to the questions: "Do you think that your mood significantly affects your learning?", 87% of respondents commented that their mood largely affected their learning. This outcome perfectly illustrates that the emotional state of students plays a fundamental role in learning and, for that reason, it is of an immense importance to carry out research like the one designed for the purpose of this study.

DISCUSSION

There were three main research questions this study sought the answers to. The first one was related to gender differences in the FLE experience, the second aimed to investigate how the level of FLE changes with the class the participants attend and their English proficiency. Finally, the third one was aimed at examining the relationship between enjoyment of learning in general and FLE. The level of foreign language enjoyment was measured by means of two different scales. That is, the FLE Scale and the FL LE Scale; both designed to assess a different type of language enjoyment. The first one measured the enjoyment one experienced as a member of a group and as an individual, and investigated the role of a teacher and peers in the enjoyment experience. The scope of the second scale was quite narrow as it referred only to the private side of enjoyment or internal sense of enjoyment. That is, feelings one experienced before, during and after his/her own learning.

Contrary to expectations, this study does not find statistically significant differences between males and females in the enjoyment experience, neither in the case of FLE, nor in FL LE. Surprisingly, the results reveal a slightly higher level of FLE in males, and statistically nearly equal level of FL LE for both groups. This outcome is contrary to that of Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014), who found that females score significantly higher on FLE than their male peers, and of Radwan (2014), who claimed that women enjoy language learning significantly more than males. This situation might be partly explained by the analysis of sources of enjoyment each gender perceives as the most crucial ones. As mentioned in the literature on FLE, the process of

learning a foreign language implicates two main sources of enjoyment. That is to say, making progress towards the goal and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Dewaele, & MacIntyre, 2014). The results of this study match that observation to a certain degree. The participants of the present study indicate authentic use of English, possibility of self-development, and the teacher's attitude as key sources of enjoyment. However, contrary to expectations, the relationship with peers is only on the fifth position in importance for the students. This outcome is inconsistent with what has been observed by Lumby (2011), who claimed that the development of social relations is of the utmost importance in order to experience learning enjoyment. A possible explanation for these results might be the fact that high-school pupils constitute a specific group of learners whose needs are different from those of the younger groups of learners and who become aware that their academic achievement level is in their control. For that reason, they derive more joy and satisfaction from being involved in such tasks which may enrich their practical and useful knowledge, and through which they may develop. It does not mean that developing social relationships is not important for high school students, but it might not be their main source of enjoyment.

Taking a closer look at these results, a significant gender difference in correlation between FLE and the source of enjoyment for each group can be found. For women, the following factors have the strongest correlation with FLE: self-development, demanding activities, and perspective of authentic use of English. For men, in turn, authentic use of language, teacher's sense of humour and interesting topic of a class have the highest correlation with the level of FLE. Once more, for both groups learning practical, useful, and authentic material in FL is of a central importance in order to experience learning enjoyment. Females' views confirm Arnold's (2011) observation that experiencing real achievement is the surest way to self-esteem, and later on to enjoyment. Males' views are in agreement with those observed by Goetz et al. (2009), who claimed that the teacher's enthusiasm has a beneficial effect on enjoyment which, in turn, positively affects learning.

Taken together, it seems that although girls and boys have different sources of enjoyment, FLE is possible to be at a high level for all students. Moreover, gender appears to have a less significant influence on FLE than expected. In other words, males seem to be equally likely to experience a high level of enjoyment as their female peers; and the other way round, females might be as prone to experience a low level of FLE as males. However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be generalisable.

With respect to the second research question, the results revealed that there is a tendency for FLE to increase with the level of students' grades, their language proficiency, and varies greatly depending on the class the students attend.

The results indicate that the average grade of the female participants is significantly higher than that of the males. Nevertheless, there are no major differences between the two groups in terms of their self-report of reading, writing,

speaking, and listening. Thus, it seems that girls and boys assess their language skills in a similar way, but external evaluation (e.g. grades given by teachers, grades scored in tests) is in the favour of girls.

A series of correlational analysis was carried out in order to examine the relationships between grades and self-report of participants, and their FL enjoyment. The obtained results indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between the participants' grades and their foreign language enjoyment. That is to say, the higher the grades and self-report are, the higher the levels of FLE and FL LE are; and the other way round, the lower students' achievement and self-report are, the lower the level of enjoyment is. These results are consistent with other research which found that high level of FLE results in high achievement (Dewaele, & MacIntyre, 2014).

As students' proficiency in this study was assessed on the basis of the aggregated results from students' grades and their self-report, not surprisingly, the correlation between proficiency and FLE is positive and significant as well. The results show that the level of FLE gradually increases with students' proficiency. That is, while the group of elementary students experience the lowest level of FLE, the group of the advanced students finds in language learning the greatest enjoyment. It might be caused by the fact that the more fluent and proficient the students are in a FL and the more things and ideas they are able to express by the means of a FL, the more pleasure they derive from learning and the more enjoyable experience the FL learning becomes.

One of the most surprising aspects of the data emerges from the analysis of the effect of the class the students attend on the level of FLE they experience. As observed by Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014), FLE gradually increases with the age of the learners and, in general, tends to rise for those in older learner group. However, the finding of the current study does not fully support that observation. The results reveal that there is a tendency for both FLE and FL LE to increase from first to the second grade of a secondary school and to dramatically decrease in the third grade. Logically, the same results are observed in case of students' age. This discrepancy could be attributed to several things. Firstly, the stress associated with the Matura Exam negatively and significantly affects the level of FLE as revealed by the ANOVA procedure. The students who report that they experience the pressure associated with the exam have lower score on FLE than those who do not feel pressure. It is reasonable to believe that the third-graders feel more stressed and anxious than the two remaining groups of students, and this heightened anxiety lessens their enjoyment of learning a foreign language. Another possible explanation might be the fact that from one class to another the level of language proficiency increases, and thus, the material the students are faced with, becomes more and more demanding, and for many students simply increasingly difficult. While some students seem to take the challenge and are eager to overcome the difficulties they encounter while learning, others are strongly discouraged and their level of language enjoyment is substantially reduced.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research aimed to shed more light on the relationship between enjoyment and learning English as a foreign language and to advance the understanding of this intricate relationship from the perspective of gender. The results revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females in their foreign language enjoyment experience, apart from the group of students' attending the first year of the secondary school.

Nevertheless, the female and male participants differ significantly in terms of what each group perceives as the most crucial sources of enjoyment. It has also been found that students' proficiency, their positive attitude towards the teacher, and their interest in the FL culture have a positive and a far-reaching impact on FLE. One of the most significant aspects of this study is the drop in enjoyment in the third class of a secondary school. Although possible explanations for that outcome were provided, this aspect is still in need for further investigation in future research.

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for the future practice.

First of all, FL teachers should not only be aware of the deleterious effects of negative emotions that students may experience while learning a language, but also of the profound effects of positive emotions, with enjoyment in particular, that may greatly facilitate the long and demanding process of foreign language learning. It is due to the fact that positive emotions are not only accompanied by the individual's well-being, but more importantly, they may build an individual's enduring personal resources, ranging from the physical and intellectual resources to psychological and social ones (Fredrickson, 2002).

Secondly, in order to experience a high level FLE, students need to have a sense of self-development, as it was in the case of the participants of this study. In order to experience self-development, in turn, the challenges learners are faced with must become increasingly complex, and it seems to be a teacher's task to provide learners with such activities. Nevertheless, the task students deal with should be carefully adjusted to their foreign language capacity. It is crucial to mention, however, that the level of teaching should not be lowered and the tasks students deal with should not be trivial and easy ones, on the contrary, students need to be engaged in the optimal challenges, as only dealing with demanding activities may lead to self-development, and later on to enjoyment.

The findings of the present study, as well as of the previous ones, have shown that the key to effectiveness in teaching a FL is to make learning a positive and enjoyable experience, to set students challenges, and to carefully tailor the FL activities to the needs of the students, as the best academic results are achieved by those students who enjoy learning a FL (Dewaele, & MacIntyre, 2014). Moreover, a successful FL teacher is the one who creates appropriate conditions for the students to flourish by focusing on their resources and abilities emphasizing the least successes of the students, instead of pointing out the

smallest mistakes and failures. Building positive, pleasurable and safe atmosphere, yet still being an authority, are vital factors for English teachers if they want their students to enjoy language learning.

The findings of this study reveal also a significant drop in FLE in the third class of the secondary school. Thus, language teachers should be aware that the students attending the final class of a secondary school constitute a specific group of learners whose needs differ from those of the younger groups of learners and for whom plays, and funny activities do not evoke joy, but rather cause boredom or even frustration. Instead, they are more pragmatic and in need of learning things which might be useful in everyday life. Another explanation for the this significant drop in FLE might be an increased level anxiety that learners may experience before the upcoming final exam. While for some students this stress is motivating, other students are overwhelmed with the vision of exam, they experience an increased level of test-anxiety and a high pressure either from peers, parents, or even a teacher.

Finally, an ideal situation for enjoyment to take place in the FL classroom would be if every single lesson of English evoked positive emotions in students, and every single lesson was an enjoyable experience generating interest and arousing curiosity; further, an experience during which a teacher sets challenges and students derive satisfaction from small successes, not only the final outcome, e.g. satisfactory result at the final exam in English. As it is in the case of sportsmen, or musicians, for whom every single training is enjoyable, every new skill acquired gives satisfaction, not only winning an important match or giving an excellent performance in front of an audience. This is certainly a more positive model of teaching and learning a FL that most of us encountered at schools. Undoubtedly, striving to create such, almost ideal, conditions for language learning seems to be extremely difficult for many educators, yet, not impossible.

It is believed that the results of this research highlight the beneficial effects of enjoyment on learning and teaching English as a foreign language. The present study has confirmed previous findings on FLE to a certain degree (e.g. that enjoyment gradually increases with students' proficiency) and contributed additional evidence suggesting that there are no significant differences between males and females in FLE, while such differences are found in terms of the sources of FLE each gender perceive as the most crucial ones. As it is the first study to investigate the effect of gender on FLE, it sheds a new light on the nature of enjoyment, yet, at the same time, this research has generated many questions in need of further investigation, e.g. why does the level of FLE decrease in the final class of a secondary grammar school? Are there any gender differences in FLE among the younger or older group of learners? Although this study has revealed considerable benefits of FLE on FL learning, more research is still required to further investigate the role of FLE in the SLA context, as well as of other positive emotions and their influence on foreign language learning, as it is still an unexplored area of research.

LIMITATIONS

The generalisability of these results is subject to certain limitations. The reader should bear in mind that the study is based on students' self-reports only, which seems to be rather subjective. A possible solution to that might be to collect the data from school registers. However, not only would that be extremely time consuming, but also the students would feel less anonymous and less eager to participate in the study.

Moreover, the study is based on students' responses only and the researcher is able to understand the phenomenon of foreign language enjoyment only from one perspective. It is suggested for the further researchers in the field to take into account also the teacher's perspective, for instance by conducting interviews with the teachers, and thus collect their accounts on enjoyment experienced by their pupils.

Another important limitation lies in the fact that the majority of the respondents in this study were females. However, this is the result of natural groups; females constitute a vast majority of the secondary school students. What is more, the research sample is relatively small and an examination of a wider group of students could have positive impact on study's reliability, and the research results could be generalised on a greater scale.

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