

Sojo University

- A private STEM focused University in Kumamoto, Japan.
- Survey administered to students enrolled in the English Communication IV (EC4) Course. (n=598; 408 male, 189 female, 1 gender not indicated)
- EC4 is the final compulsory English course for Sojo Students.

EC4 Curriculum

Stated Goals for EC4 are:

- Sustain and extend conversation on a variety of personal topics and topics related to my field of study.
- Talk and write about personal experiences.
- Read simple English text more quickly.

Research Context

Our research deals with the emotions of Japanese university students enrolled in a compulsory English course.

Focus on both negative emotions, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), and positive emotions, Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE).

Prior research in language learner emotion within Japan has mostly focused on negative emotions such as anxiety. There is limited research into language learner enjoyment within Japan, and no prior research into language learner enjoyment focused on Japanese university students.

Methods

- Mixed-Method convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011)
- Quantitative and Qualitative data gathered simultaneously
- Qualitative data used to validate and add depth to quantitative results
- All items and questions presented in Japanese (Respondents L1)

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between enjoyment and anxiety among Japanese university students?
- What is the relationship between FLE and FLCA, learners' attitudes toward English, their relative level of English and the language skill they report using most often in class?
- Are there differences in FLE, FLCA, attitude and relative level between male and female students?
- Which activities do learners feel create a sense of enjoyment and which create feelings of anxiety?

Survey Instrument

- Demographic Information: Department, Gender, Teacher
- Foreign Language Enjoyment: 12 items (6-point Likert scale)
- Foreign Language Anxiety: 6 items (6-point Likert scale)
- Learners' attitudes toward English: Likert scale, 1 to 4
- Learners' relative level of English: Likert scale, 1 to 4
- Language skill (speaking, listening, reading, writing) used most often in class.



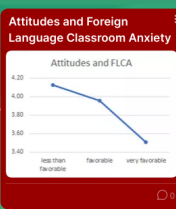
Results from Quantitative Data

Relationships between FLE, FLCA, attitudes toward English, relative level and the language skill learners report using most often in class were examined using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, t-tests and ANOVA.

Gender differences were analysed using t-tests.

Most results were similar to past research (e.g. Dewaele et al. 2017). However, our respondents expressed **more enjoyment** (higher FLE scores) and **less anxiety** (lower FLCA scores). This is different to past research (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019) which shows that Asian learners (primarily Chinese) tend to have more anxiety and less enjoyment.

Click a graph or table to enlarge it.



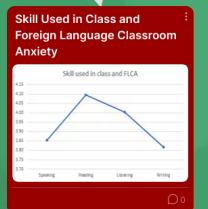
Comparison by Gender

	FLE	FLCA	Attitudes	Relative Level
Female	4.26	4.05	4.52	4.17
Male	4.02	3.87	4.33	3.87

Overall females respondents had higher scores.

However, only the difference in relative level is significant.

This is similar to results from past research (e.g. Dewaele, et al. 2016)



Enjoyment: Classroom Activities

Many students identified specific classroom activities as a source of enjoyment. Interactive and gamified activities, such as Kahoot quizzes or vocabulary study using Quizlet live, featured heavily, while some students identified creating and recording a story about their own life as part of the Extended Monologue unit. A number of students also point to the Self-Directed Learning unit, a series of classes focused on teacher-supported self-study, and feeling agency over their learning as a source of enjoyment.

"I think Quizlet was good. I enjoyed studying words."

"Active learning was fun. It was good to be able to study what I wanted to do."

Results from Qualitative Data

Respondents were asked to describe both an enjoyable aspect of their English class and an aspect which engenders feelings of anxiety.

- In as much detail as you can, write about an enjoyable learning experience in your second-year English class, and how you felt about it.
- In as much detail as you can, write about an anxious learning experience in your second-year English class, and how you felt about it.

Adapted from Dewaele & Alkawazir, 2018. Questions and responses originally given in Japanese.

Enjoyment: Social Interaction

Many responses identify social interaction as an enjoyable aspect of the EC4 curriculum. Group work, talking with partners and learning about classmates' lives are mentioned in a number of responses. This social aspect of English class, and the opportunities for students to use a second language to interact in ways they might not normally seems to be a valuable source of enjoyment for some students.

"Interactive classes are fun, the class has become more close, and friends have increased."

"I couldn't pronounce English well, but I was able to learn while laughing with my friends, and it was a fun experience."

"I enjoyed talking with each other because I was able to communicate with others and get to know each other."

Enjoyment: Mastery or Improvement of English Skills

Some students identified a sense of progress with their English ability, the mastery of a skill or improvement in an area of English as a key source of enjoyment. Recognition of this progress from both teachers and peers also featured as a source of enjoyment in some responses.

"I really enjoyed writing my own English composition and recording it. In addition, I think that my reading comprehension has improved through timed reading."

Questions or Comments

If you have any questions or comments about our study please contact us.

You can leave a comment below the relative area and check back for a response, or email any of us at the addresses below:

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The qualitative questions were not compulsory and many students gave no response or a severely limited one. Other students, however, gave considered and detailed responses which we feel help to elucidate the quantitative data we have gathered. English translations of some of these responses have been given here.

For an interactive version of this poster please follow this QR code or visit the URL below.

<https://bit.ly/3mm0v6i>

References

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Anxiety: Speaking

Some students identify speaking as a source of anxiety in English class. They say they are not sure what to say when "put on the spot" or called on by the teacher for an answer and they have concerns about their pronunciation and making grammatical errors. For some students speaking in groups is a source of anxiety, rather than enjoyment.

Anxiety: Listening

Other students identified listening as a source of anxiety and mention being unable to understand their teacher's instructions and an inability to complete listening based work. There were very few comments about not being able to understand peers in the class, perhaps suggesting there are issues with native-level speakers speed or pronunciation for some students. Alternatively, students may default to using their L1 in English class for communication with peers, perhaps due to anxieties surrounding L2 use.

Anxiety: Grammar

Some responses identified student concerns about grammatical errors as a source of anxiety. This was most often mentioned with regard to writing activities, although it was still reasonably prominent regarding speaking. This is perhaps unsurprising due to the prominence grammar is given within Japanese junior high school and high school English classes and in common English proficiency tests such as the Toeic. Japanese English-learners may associate grammatical errors with failure and as evidence of low English ability even if they are not impediments to L2 communication, as has been shown in previous research with Sojo students (e.g., Bollen & Faherty, 2016).