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**Understanding Chinese high school students' Foreign Language  
Enjoyment: Validation of the Chinese version of the Foreign Language  
Enjoyment Scale<sup>1</sup>**

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**Understanding Chinese High School Students' Foreign Language  
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Language Enjoyment Scale**

**Abstract**

Scholarly attention for Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) has sharply increased in the past three years for its role in facilitating language learning as well as promoting language learners' well-being. However, the conceptualization and measurement of FLE in China, which has the largest number of EFL learners in the world, is only just starting. Adopting a mixed-method approach, the current study examined the psychometric properties of the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, and investigated FLE in a specific Chinese EFL context. Through surveying two samples of 1,718 students and 360 students in Stages 1 and 2, a new 11-item and 3-factor model (i.e. *FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher*, and *FLE-Atmosphere*) was confirmed and validated. The students scored highest on *FLE-Teacher*, followed by *FLE-Private* and *FLE-Atmosphere*. The analysis of the qualitative data collected from 64 participants in Stage 3 showed that beyond the general factors linked to the teacher and peers, the individual experience of FLE is shaped by a large range of learner-internal and learner-external variables.

**Keywords:** Positive Psychology; Foreign Language Enjoyment; Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale; Second Language Acquisition; EFL Learning

## **1. Introduction**

Stimulated by Positive Psychology, there has been a growing research interest in positive emotions experienced by foreign language learners (Oxford, 2015). Language learning researchers' interest in emotions has mainly focused on a single negative foreign language classroom emotion, anxiety (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Dewaele & Li, 2018). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), MacIntyre and Gregersen (2014) and Imai (2010) have argued in favor of a more holistic view of emotions in which positive emotions are not merely viewed as mirror images of negative emotions. They pleaded for more attention to the combined roles of positive and negative emotions as drivers of foreign language learning (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017; Reeve, 2018; Saito, Dewaele, Abe, & In'nami, to appear). Studies on positive emotions are necessary and deserve more attention because they not only facilitate foreign language learning by bringing some cognitive and motivational benefits (Butler, 2017; Reeve, 2018; MacIntyre et al., to appear), but also promote well-being (Fredrickson, 2013; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). This echoes the key tenets of Positive Psychology as well as the holistic view on humans advocated by humanistic teaching approach (Arnold, 1998; Waterman, 2013). The

second reason is more practical, as a better understanding in the relationship between positive emotions and foreign language learning could allow foreign language teachers to become more effective (Dewaele, 2013). Foreign language enjoyment (FLE) is a concept that resonates with the emerging field of Positive Psychology and more specifically the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001). It shares with other positive emotions the ability to broaden individual's momentary repertoires of thoughts and actions and build their psychological resiliency and personal resources (Fredrickson, 2001, Oxford, 2015). FLE boosts foreign language learning as it encourages learners to play and be creative and to explore an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural world (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).4).

The first study on FLE used a large international sample (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), in which Asian participants stood out in reporting lower FLE and higher foreign language classroom anxiety. More recent work was situated in a single EFL (Japanese) context considering the effect of emotions (FLE versus anxiety) and motivational dispositions on English speech learning patterns (Saito et al., to appear). The study showed that emotions and motivation all explained unique variance in comprehensibility development.

Jiang and Li (2017) was the first to argue for scholarly attention to positive emotions in the SLA field in the Chinese EFL context. The aims

of the present study are twofold: provide a validated Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale as an efficient quantitative measurement for future studies on FLE, and provide a better understanding of FLE (i.e. conceptual structure, levels and characteristics, and sources) in the context of Chinese high schools. The findings might have important implications for EFL learning and teaching in China.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Enjoyment, Flow and Foreign Language Learning**

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) and Csikszentmihalyi (2008, 2014) defined enjoyment by first distinguishing it from pleasure. Enjoyment can be defined as good feelings coming from breaking through homeostatic limits and stretching beyond oneself to accomplish something new or even unexpected, especially in face of some difficult tasks. In contrast, pleasure is considered simply as the good feeling people experience when their homeostatic needs (e.g. hunger, sex, and bodily comfort) are satisfied in a hedonic state (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). That means enjoyment is characterized by “a sense of novelty and of accomplishment” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 46) and contributes to personal development and long-term well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Enjoyment was described as a key component of flow experiences

(Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, 2014). Flow is a state that is comprised of holistic concentration and complete involvement in an activity, lack of self-consciousness and distraction, and distorted perception of the passage of time (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, 2014). Flow occurs when one is highly engaged in a challenging task which makes him/her neither overwhelmed nor under-challenged (Oxford, 2015; Butler, 2017; MacIntyre, 2016; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Flow has been shown to play an important role in enhancing learning and language development in the foreign language classroom (Egbert, 2004; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Dewaele and MacIntyre (to appear) considered the percentage of classroom time in a state of positive flow and anti-flow by 232 Spanish foreign language learners from around the world. Participants reported experiencing significantly more flow than anti-flow. Positive flow experience was linked to a higher degree of multilingualism, high relative standing in the group, age, and years of study. Scholars have called for more research on flow and its relationship with enjoyment (MacIntyre, 2016; Egbert, 2004).

The essential role of enjoyment in foreign language learning has been grounded on the *Broaden-and-Build Theory* of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) and the *Control-value Theory* of achievement emotions (Pekrun, Götz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). They both emerged as underpinnings for

Positive Psychology. According to the former, positive emotions like enjoyment facilitate the building of resources in language learning with their positive power to broaden an individual's perspective, and open them to absorb more in learning language (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Similarly, according to the three-dimensional taxonomy of the *Control-value Theory*, enjoyment is a *positive activating activity-focused* emotion and has been shown to positively affect learners' academic achievement (Pekrun, Frenzel, Goetz, & Perry, 2007; Pinel & Albert, 2018). Besides enhancing awareness in the environment, and strengthening the capacity for language input, enjoyment helps to dissipate the lingering effects of negative arousal, promotes psychological resiliency, improves personal well-being and facilitates building social bonds. In summary, enjoyment facilitates both language exploration and play, two key aspects in language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

## **2.2 Studies on Foreign Language Enjoyment**

The SLA field has also begun to undergo a "positive renaissance", mainly a shift of focus from the study of negative emotions, especially anxiety, to both negative and positive emotions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Enjoyment, a most typical and common positive emotion experienced by foreign language learners, has attracted increasing scholarly attention (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Gregersen, MacIntyre, & Olsen, 2017). In the



exploration into FLE during foreign language learning, studies have focused on its conceptualization, measurement and sources, as well as its potential relations to foreign language learning and to a variety of socio-biographical and psychological variables involved in foreign language learning (e.g. Brantmeier, 2003, 2005; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele, Witney, Saito, & Dewaele, 2017; De Smet et al., 2018; Pavelescu & Petrić, 2018; Saito et al., to appear).

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) developed a Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, adapting seven items from Ryan et al.'s (1990) Interest/Enjoyment subscale as the kernel of the new scale with 21 items. They gathered data from 1,742 participants from all over the world, representing 90 different nationalities. The largest nationality groups were Belgians ( $n = 365$ ) and British ( $n = 244$ ). A majority of them were Europeans ( $n = 1171$ ; 67.1%), followed by Asians ( $n = 229$ ; 13.1%), North Americans ( $n = 149$ ; 8.5%), South Americans ( $n = 92$ ; 5.3%) and other smaller groups. Chinese participants took up only about 9.9% ( $n = 174$ ) (Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau, & Dewaele, 2016, p. 245).

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) confirmed a two-factor structure (*FLE-Social* and *FLE-Private*) of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale and modified it to the 14-item version (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). A series of subsequent studies further modified the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale to a 10-item version and used it in participants from a single foreign language context (e.g. Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele

et al., 2017; Saito et al., to appear). The participants involved in Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) and Dewaele et al. (2017) were high school students in London, and 83% (156/189) of them were British. Participants were highly multilingual, and 89% (169/189) of them had English as their L1 and 76% (144/189) studied French as their L2. The participants in Saito et al. (to appear) were all Japanese high school students studying English as their L2 and had Japanese as L1.

In Dewaele and Dewaele (2017), a three factor structure for FLE was confirmed, namely *FLE-Social*, *and FLE-Private*, and *Peer-controlled versus teacher-controlled positive atmosphere*, which is different from the original two-factor structure identified in Dewaele & MacIntyre (2016) on an international sample. However, to our best knowledge, no study has yet specifically investigated the FLE of Chinese EFL students. And it remains unclear whether Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014, 2016) Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale is applicable to the Chinese population and whether the conceptual structure of FLE confirmed in previous studies could also be found in Chinese students. The focus on learners in China is also motivated by previous studies Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) that found that Chinese language learners, compared to other cultural groups, reported lower levels of FLE and other positive emotions and higher levels of foreign language anxiety and other negative emotions. One possible reason could be the very strong exam orientation in foreign language learning in China and the high stakes it represents. Many students take

extra English classes in ‘cram schools,’ from pre-school to tertiary level, which can increase their levels of language-related stress. Compared to students in other parts of the world, Chinese students endure a considerable degree of cultural pressure: “being raised in collectivistic culture which places high value on education and filial piety, Chinese adolescents are pressured to achieve academically not to disappoint their significant others and to maintain their social identity” (Essau et al., 2008, p. 803). Differences in average levels of particular emotions do not necessarily imply that the relationships between these emotions and learner-related, teacher-related and contextual variables would be any different to those in other parts of the world.

### **3. Rationale and Research Questions**

The present study is the first empirical attempt to investigate FLE in a Chinese EFL context and it answers MacIntyre and Vincze’s (2017) call for research to establish “whether positive emotion would show the same patterns in foreign language contexts, such as learning English in Japan or China” (p. 78). Rigorous procedures of different reliability and validity tests are needed of the original Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, and some modifications may be needed before using the instrument in the target cultural context. Indeed, cultural nonequivalence may hamper the measurement in a distinctive cultural context other than the original context where the measure instrument was developed (Huck, Cormier, &

Bounds, 1974; Byrne & Van de Vijver, 2010). Furthermore, we hope to provide a Chinese Version of the original Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale for beginning to advanced EFL learners. The translated version raises the issue of translation nonequivalence (Hulin, 1987), which also motivated the formulation of the first research question of our study, namely the validation of the translated scale for FLE.

Besides, as Pavlenko (2008) argued, an emotional word in one language might activate different conceptual representations in other language. For example, Japanese have a different conceptual structure of anxiety than Americans (Matsumoto, 1988). The issue of conceptual non-equivalence also motivated the second research question of our study, namely the structure of FLE among Chinese foreign language students.

Finally, besides the socio-cultural factors, the foreign language itself may also play a role in shaping foreign language learners' emotional experiences. De Smet et al. (2018) found that Belgian francophone learners of English and Dutch experienced different levels of FLE and anxiety in both foreign languages. Barton (1997) and Dewaele et al. (2016) also observed that learners' perceptions and attitudes towards different foreign languages may also vary, which make the specific socio-cultural-linguistic context an important variable (Oxford, 2016; MacIntyre, 2017; Pavelescu & Petrić, 2018). Most Chinese high school students are bilingual with Chinese as their first language and English as

their only foreign language, and they have seldom been exposed to authentic English-speaking environments, which makes them distinct from participants with access to English-speaking environments. It thus seems that the time is right to closely investigate FLE in the specific EFL learning context of China, which has the largest number of EFL learners in the world but where positive emotions in SLA have received little scholarly attention so far (Jiang & Li, 2017). This observation also motivated the second, third, and fourth research questions, namely an investigation of the factor structure of Chinese FLE, the scores on different dimensions of FLE and the sources of variation.

More specifically, the aim of the present study is firstly to provide a reliable and valid quantitative measurement of FLE applicable to Chinese EFL learners who have never been immersed in an authentic English-speaking environment. Then, we aim to provide a better understanding of FLE (i.e. factor/conceptual structure, level and sources) experienced Chinese EFL learners. Correspondingly, our present research aims to address the following four research questions:

RQ1: How valid and reliable is the new Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale?

RQ2: What is the factor structure of FLE for Chinese EFL students?

RQ3: How much FLE do Chinese high school students report?

RQ4: What are the sources for FLE of Chinese high school students?

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Research roadmap**

A research roadmap is presented in Figure 1 to visualize the whole methodology, which is detailed subsequently in this section.

*(Insert **Figure 1** here )*

### **4.2 Methods**

We adopted an exploratory sequential design in the present study (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of the quantitative data in the study is to identify Chinese EFL learners' conceptual structure of FLE, to uncover the major dimensions underlying the items that measure FLE, and to validate the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale. The qualitative data were collected after the quantitative stage in order to embellish and explain the quantitative findings in more depth and to get an insight into the multiple sources of FLE among individual learners.

### **4.3 Participants**

Participants were more than 2000 second-year high school students from three schools at different academic levels in Anhui province, China. The detailed information is displayed in Table 1.

*(Insert **Table 1** here )*

#### **4.4 Instruments**

##### **The 14-item Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale translated in Chinese (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016)**

The questionnaire started with a section for retrieving demographic information. The following section contained the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, which was originally developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014, 2016). The original version contains 21 items, each responded to on a standard 5-point Likert scale ranging from “1 (Strongly disagree)” to “5 (Strongly agree)”. It differentiates two main dimensions of FLE: *FLE-Social* and *FLE-Private*. Alphas obtained for the global FLE is .86, for *FLE-Social* and *FLE-Private* are .87 and .78 respectively, indicating a very high internal consistency. The original 21-item version of FLE scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) was updated to a more economical 14-item version (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

The translation of the 14-item version and back translation were completed by two bilingual professionals in psychology and linguistics. And the translated version of the scale underwent revisions based upon comments from five foreign language teachers and 20 foreign language students in the three high schools investigated before the formal questionnaires were administered.

##### **Open question**

Following Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), an open question was included:

“Please describe one specific event or episode in your EFL class that you really enjoyed, and describe your feeling as detailed as possible”. The question was in Chinese, and the participants answered the question in Chinese correspondingly. This ensured that students could express their emotional experience of FLE clearly and accurately.

#### **4.5 Data collection**

There were three stages for our data collection as shown in the roadmap in Figure 1. Before administering questionnaires in each stage, we obtained consent from school presidents, headmasters, EFL teachers and students in each school. Students’ individual consent was obtained at the start of the surveys. Questionnaires in paper-and-pen format were administered in classroom situation.

Data collection in the first stage was conducted from early May to early June 2017. The data were intended for most quantitative analyses in response to RQ1 and RQ2. The questionnaire used in this stage included demographical information and the original 14-item Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016) in Chinese.

The purpose of the second stage of data collection was to provide data for the formal Confirmatory Factor Analysis to finally confirm the new factor structure of the modified Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale emerging from the data collected in Stage 1. Data collection in this stage was conducted from late June to early July 2017.



The questionnaire used in this stage included demographical information and the modified 11-item Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (see Appendix).

Data collection in the third stage was conducted in October 2017. Sixty-four participants recruited in Stage 1 were also involved in the open question in this stage.

#### **4.6 Data analyses**

In terms of Research Questions 1 and 2, a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were performed by using SPSS 19.0 and M-PLUS 7.4 to confirm the construct validity (factor structure). Besides, item analysis, reliability tests (e.g. internal consistency and split-half reliability) and other kinds of validity tests (e.g. convergent validity and discriminant validity) were conducted by using SPSS and Exps.exe. In terms of Research Question 3, descriptive analyses were performed with SPSS 19.0 to describe the level of FLE. With regard to Research Question 4, the qualitative data obtained in Stage 3 were analyzed by Nvivo 10 to identify sources for different dimensions of FLE.

### **5. Results**

The following results are presented in response to our research questions, following their order.

## **5.1 Validity and reliability of the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale**

### **5.1.1 Construct Validity**

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was first conducted to investigate whether participants' responses to the 14 items in this study fit the original two-factor model sufficiently well (NNFI=.80; CFI= .84). The CFA results indicated that the model was not supported ( $\chi^2(76) = 2076.470$ ; CFI = .723; TLI = .669; SRMR = .115; RMSEA = .124).

Considering that the first Confirmatory Factor Analysis was unsatisfactory, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to find a new two-factor structure. Principal Component Analysis and Varimax with KAISER Normalization were combined to extract two factors. Two items with loadings lower than .40 were deleted. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was further done to confirm the two-factor structure. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis results indicated that the 12-item and two-factor model was poorly supported ( $\chi^2(55) = 1557.890$ ; CFI = .751; TLI = .701; SRMR = .147; RMSEA = .126).

Considering the failure of the two-factor extraction, a new Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted by combining Principal Component Analysis and Varimax with KAISER Normalization without the two-factor extraction limits. One item with loadings lower than .40 was removed and a two-factor structure with 13 items was then obtained.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was further conducted to confirm the new model. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis results indicated that the new model had a significantly better fit than prior trials ( $\chi^2(62) = 378.675$ ; CFI = .951; TLI = .938; SRMR = .050; RMSEA = .055). However, considering the  $\chi^2/df$  of 6.11 is more than the acceptable level of 5, we further removed two items with the lowest loadings. The remaining 11 items' responses underwent a new Confirmatory Factor Analysis with the results ( $\chi^2(41) = 157.444$ ; CFI = .980; TLI = .973; SRMR = .034; RMSEA = .041). The loadings for all the 11 items are at acceptable level, indicating that the new 11-item three-factor model is sufficiently supported by the data (see Fig. 1).

*(Insert Figure 2. here )*

In order to confirm the new model further, the formal Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted by using the data retrieved from responses of 360 pupils collected in Stage 2. The results demonstrated that the three-factor model is an excellent fit of the data ( $\chi^2(41) = 72.975$ ; CFI = .975; TLI = .967; SRMR = .034; RMSEA = .041). The loadings of the 11 items are all at acceptable level (See Fig. 2.).

*(Insert Figure 3. here )*

### **5.1.2 Item analysis**

An independent-samples *t-test* was performed between the high-score group and low-score group by comparing the responses to each item of participants. The results showed that there is a significant difference

between the two groups for each of the 11 items (all at  $p < .01$  level), indicating that all the items in the scale were appropriate for further analysis.

### **5.1.3 Reliability**

#### 5.1.3.1 Internal consistency

Internal consistency was assessed by using Cronbach's Alpha. The alphas for the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, the subscales of *FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher*, and *FLE-Atmosphere* were .826, .792, .896, and .778 respectively, indicating that the items have high reliability and that the items could be used in further analysis.

#### 5.1.3.2 Split-half reliability

The split-half reliability method was adopted to assess the internal reliability. The *Rhh* correlation between the two halves (Item 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and Item 2, 4, 6, 8, 10) was .783, and the *Rtt* (split-half reliability of the scale) was found to be .878, indicating that the scale has high internal reliability.

### **5.1.4 Validity**

#### 5.1.4.1 Convergent validity

The convergent validity was also assessed to testify the validity of each subscale. As displayed in Table 2, the model in each subscale fit the data

perfectly, indicating that the current data were appropriate for the analysis of convergent validity.

*(Insert Table 2 here)*

#### 5.1.4.2 Discriminant validity

We adopted the *AVE* (Average Variance Extracted) method to assess the discriminant validity (DV) between subscales; specifically, we compared the *AVE* with  $r^2$  (determination coefficient). As shown in Table 2 and Fig. 2, the AVE for the three subscales were .502, .727, and .563, and the  $r^2$  for Scale 1 and Scale 2 was  $.066^2$ , for Scale 1 and Scale 3 was  $.056^2$ , and for Scale 2 and Scale 3 was  $.053^2$ . Obviously all AVEs were higher than  $r^2$ , indicating high DV of each subscale.

## **5.2 Factor structure of the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language**

### **Enjoyment Scale**

Based upon the three-factor model confirmed in Section 5.1.1 and the corresponding items contained in each factor, the three factors of the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale were thus confirmed and named as *FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher* and *FLE-Atmosphere*.

The three-factor model generated portrayed high school students in China as enjoying the fun, accomplishments, and interesting things in their EFL learning, teachers' encouraging and supportive attitudes towards them, pedagogical practices, and the positive atmosphere for EFL learning.

### 5.3 Levels of Foreign Language Enjoyment

The mean scores of the Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale and each of its subscales were calculated. As presented in Fig. 3, the mean scores for the whole scale and each subscale were 34.35 (11 items), 15.23 (five items), 11.15 (three items), and 7.97 (three items) respectively (*SD* was 6.96, 3.76, 2.86 and 2.74 respectively). The average score of each item in the whole scale and each subscale were 3.12, 3.04, 3.71, and 2.65 (*SD* was 0.63, 0.75, 0.95, and 0.91 respectively), indicating that EFL students experienced most FLE on the dimension of *FLE-Teacher*, followed by *FLE-Private* and *FLE-Atmosphere* (See Figure 4).

(Insert **Figure 4**. here )

### 5.4 Qualitative analyses of participants' views on enjoyable episodes in EFL class

The qualitative data allowed us to enrich the interpretation of the quantitative results related to the three dimensions of FLE (*FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher*, and *FLE-Atmosphere*). We were particularly interested in the multitude of learners' perceived internal and external causes of *FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher*, *FLE-Atmosphere* and the possible interactions between them.

Sixty-four participants answered the open question, producing a total of 3,542 English words. The average length of the feedback was 55.34 words. The excerpts selected from the participants' feedback are now used

below to help clarify the nature of the three factors. In the following qualitative analyses, the most salient features of the excerpts will be identified along each dimension as themes for understanding the components, sources and the conceptualization of FLE, which are summarized in Table 3.

(Insert *Table 3* here)

#### **5.4.1 Sources of *FLE-Private***

The first dimension emerging from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis was named *FLE-Private*, emphasizing the private pleasure coalescing around personal progress, excellent performance or interesting experiences in EFL learning. Consistent with the quantitative results (see Section 5.5), most participants (62.5%: 40/64) described their enjoyable episodes in response to the open question along the dimension of *FLE-Private*. They owed their FLE to their progress in the foreign language (especially after strenuous hard work), a sense of fulfillment, happiness in pushing their limits, pride for exceptional performance, or a feeling of personal triumph for answering difficult questions. These positive feelings are all consistent with the definition of enjoyment as well as the ideas about optimal experiences: “The best moments usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 3). CYP offers a typical view:

**CYP** (male, 17): I was poor in English. I felt very happy when I made great progress after hard work of a whole semester, and I exceeded the past self and I became one of the average group in class. And I was also praised by the English teacher for my progress when I answered her question correctly and quickly. I felt very happy because all my efforts paid back.

Many episodes of enjoyment reported by the participants were also related to instances of personal experiences of novelty during foreign language exploration. The novelty could be in themes, content, techniques in foreign language class (e.g. multimedia use of PowerPoint, movies, English songs, and games). These positive emotional states mostly occur when participants are immersed in new and interesting things beyond textbooks. These activities transcend vocabulary and grammar, to focus on the exploration of cultural treasures and experiencing diverse ways of being, doing and seeing. That is, they explore a new world in play, as RJY explains:

**RJY** (male, 17): The English teacher once used PPT and movie clips to show us the different life, habits and festivals in foreign countries with the use of multimedia. This helped to broaden our horizon. And it seemed that I was just there at that time. And we also had a relaxing classroom environment. I like this feeling very much.



Positive changes in the perception of foreign language, as well as in the perception of foreign language self were also important sources of FLE. Students found foreign language learning enjoyable when they began to realize the usefulness of English beyond exams, when they started to find interesting things in English itself and developed positive attitudes towards English or positive feelings of themselves in English study. This was the view expressed by ZHY:

**ZYH** (female, 18): When the English teacher taught us an English song, I practiced a lot. And when I could sing it out in English without any mistakes, I felt proud and began to show interest in English. I thought I fell in love with English at that moment. I could do a better job in English. And I became confident in learning English well.

Foreign language use in class was also a salient theme in describing FLE experiences. Students like WWJ enjoyed communicating or socializing with peers in class in English to practice and consolidate newly-acquired words or expression:

**WWJ** (female, 18): The English teacher asked us to describe our classmates or teachers in English with the new words we were learning, and let others guess who was being described. We had a lot of enjoyment and meanwhile we easily remembered the new words.

Students particularly enjoyed classes where they were totally

absorbed, and they were so concentrated that they lost the consciousness of time, forgot anything outside class, or even lost the sense of self. They felt extremely happy when the bell rang and they were surprised that time passed so quickly. And they also felt they had learnt a lot of things in the class. This state of high concentration on task at hand is the most frequently mentioned dimension of flow experiences. Thus, enjoyment is not only one essential component of flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, 2014; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016), but can be boosted during/by the flow experience, indicating a potential reciprocal pathway between them. TZJ's words are a textbook example of flow:

**TZJ** (male, 17): I was so absorbed in the English class that I forgot everything else, and I forgot the time. When the bell rang, I felt suddenly interrupted and couldn't believe the class was over and hoped that I could have more experiences like this.

Some students described their enjoyable experiences as related to their familiarity with or certainty of what the foreign language teacher was trying to address, emphasize, or question. Students felt they were faced with something that deserved attention and effort, but at the same time they did not feel overwhelmed by it because of a degree of familiarity or the realization that they knew how to cope with it. ZY felt that this sense of certainty and predictability makes FLE happen:

**ZY** (male, 17): I knew very well about what the teacher was

teaching and I was quite sure about the answer to the question the teacher was asking. And also, for some difficult content, I knew exactly how he would teach it. These were enjoyable experiences and after class I found more related exercises to consolidate it.

#### **5.4.2 Sources of *FLE-Teacher***

The second dimension emerging from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis was named *FLE-Teacher*, highlighting the enjoyable experiences related to foreign language teachers' supportive and encouraging attitude towards students, and their pedagogical practices. According to most descriptions, EFL teachers' praise, personal attention, recognition and encouragement of students, and their involvement in students' concerns boosted enjoyable experiences. This is not surprising in teacher-dominant foreign language classes because students tend to rely heavily on teachers to get useful feedback and assessment, who tend to lead the learning process, and the interactions between students and teachers. CYP still glows thinking about the teacher's praise:

**CYP** (male, 18): I felt very happy when I was praised by English teacher for my progress when I answered her question correctly and quickly.

Many students appreciated their foreign language teachers' use of non-traditional techniques or strategies (e.g. multimedia, role-play, and group activities) to make the class more attractive, interesting, and comprehensible, to enliven the classroom climate, and to enhance students'

engagement and concentration in class. LXY remembers the glimpse that multimedia gave her of life outside China:

**LXY** (female, 17): The English teacher once showed us the different life, habits and festivals in foreign countries via multimedia.

In fact, the dimension of *FLE-Teacher* can partly overlap with the other two dimensions of FLE because in the teacher-centered tradition, teachers play a central role in class, directly or indirectly involved in the sources for triggering students' experiences of FLE. That is probably the reason why foreign language teachers were mentioned by 49 (49/64: 76.57%) participants for their attitudes or their pedagogical practices boosting FLE, or just for their involvement in and indirect contribution to the enjoyable events. Similar trends appeared in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), but foreign language teachers were mentioned in only 20% of the narratives. Chinese foreign language teachers thus seem to play an even more important role as primary source of their students' FLE.

#### **5.4.3 Sources of *FLE-Atmosphere***

The third dimension emerging from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis was named *FLE-Atmosphere*. Participants' descriptions of their enjoyable episodes in the foreign language class showed that some classroom group activities could boost their levels of FLE. These included group activities (recitation, story-telling, puzzle), role-play, or making group

representations. In other words, group activities activated students, offered them a choice shaping the activities, allowed them to be actively engaged in classroom socialization, and judicious use of the foreign language allowed them to emphasize their group membership. Many students reported most FLE when they felt proud of their group performance. The descriptions also highlighted the crucial role of the classroom climate in the experience of FLE, which was established among teachers, peers, and the selves. The episodes reported were closely related to foreign language teachers' pedagogical practices to make the class more attractive and to improve students' involvement, peers' positive engagement, and the creation of a good atmosphere. WTT explained that both teachers and peers directly contributed to boosting her FLE:

**WTT** (female, 18): The English teacher asked us to describe our classmates or teachers in English with the new words we are learning, and let others guess who is being described. I found it so interesting. And we all laughed when someone was described in a funny way and we could suddenly guess the one described. The English teacher also laughed a lot. And she was also described humorously by my classmates. We all laughed, and she was also very happy. All my classmates were very positively involved, and the class environment was active. We enjoyed and relaxed ourselves very much, and meanwhile we put the new words into

active use. I was very happy about that.

The three dimensions of FLE were analyzed separately for the convenience of interpretation. The emotional state of foreign language learners is dynamic and complex, where a specific event could be triggered and influenced by interacting factors along different dimensions. FLE is inter-related with other dimensions. In other words, foreign language learners' experience of FLE could be simultaneously boosted by their private pleasure, by their teachers' attitude or pedagogical practices, and by the positive classroom environment. That is to say, there was overlapping coding, as some narratives could be seen as illustrations of *FLE-Atmosphere* as much as *FLE-Private* and *FLE-Teacher*. The code thus reflected the dominant dimension in the learners' words rather than the exclusive presence of the dimension.

Reading the narratives reminded us that enjoyment for one student might not be enjoyment for others (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, p. 227). For example, some students with extremely low foreign language proficiency may feel frustrated or embarrassed when asked to use foreign language to communicate with their peers in class. And some students may be more accustomed to traditional class instead of the multimedia-based one especially in grammar. They may not experience enjoyment when their teacher uses PowerPoint. Thus, a multitude of individual differences shape FLE.

Despite the differences, the analysis of the themes showed some striking commonalities with the themes that emerged from Dewaele & MacIntyre's (2014) international sample. Enjoyable classroom episodes reported by their participants were frequently linked to teacher pedagogical practices and specific classroom activities, private realization of progress, teacher and peer recognition, and authentic use of foreign language (p. 256).

## **6. Discussion**

This study first examined the psychometric properties of the translated 14-item Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, and modified it to a valid and reliable 11-item Chinese Version, which is different from both the results in the international sample (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016) and in a single London foreign language context (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017), supporting the need of establishing measurement equivalence when the instrument is used in a different cultural group other than in the context where it was originally developed. Our study thus provided an effective modified version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale for future related studies in a specific Chinese EFL context.

The identification of a three-factor/dimension structure of FLE (i.e. *FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher*, and *FLE-Atmosphere*) provides a better understanding of the conceptualization of Chinese EFL students' FLE. In line with the two-factor structure (*FLE-Private* and *FLE-Social*) confirmed in previous studies (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016), both the private and the

interpersonal nature of FLE were addressed. However, the present study showed that FLE experienced in the Chinese context was mostly linked to the teachers, the learner and also the atmosphere established by interactions among the learner, the teacher and the peers, but controlled by the teacher. The exclusive control by the teacher in establishing a positive atmosphere points to a unique feature of Chinese culture, namely a “high acceptance of power and authority” (Rao, 2006, p. 494). In Chinese foreign language learning, “students are more accustomed to teacher-centered classroom activities” (p. 496), and the teacher sets the emotional tone in foreign language classes as they are in complete control. Previous studies based on mainly Western samples pointed to the crucial role of teachers in boosting FLE (Dewaele et al, 2017). Teachers were described as “conductors” rather than as figures of unquestioned authority. Despite the differences in the role of the teacher in the West and in China, the relationships between FLE and contextual factors are very similar.

Finally, our study described the levels of global FLE and each of its three dimensions. Qualitative findings not only shed light on the causes of three types of FLE, expanding previous findings (Dewaele et al. 2017) on learner-internal variables and teacher variables, but also on classroom atmosphere variables. The present study identified excellent foreign language performance as one major source for enjoyment, dovetailing with the empirical results in Goetz, Frenzel, Hall and Pekrun (2008). Evidence of the facilitative role of enjoyment in foreign language learning strengthens MacIntyre et al.’s (to appear) claim that foreign language



achievement and emotions are in a reciprocal relationship.

The large sample size and inclusion of learners at different achievement levels allowed us to present a good panorama of Chinese senior high school students' FLE experiences. A word of caution is still needed at this point about the generalizability of our results. First, although the sample size is large, all the participants were at the same instructional level and from the same province of China. Participants from a wider range of places and proficiency levels could be included to provide a fuller picture of FLE. Second, the use of traditional retrospective quantitative and qualitative data averages out short-term fluctuations. Future mixed methods studies on FLE may focus on the dynamic changes and fluctuations during a single foreign language class for example, following the design used in Waninge, de Bot and Dörnyei (2014) to observe motivational dynamics.

## **7. Conclusion**

The Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale proved to be a sufficiently reliable and valid measure of FLE for the Chinese EFL context and has a different factor structure from the original in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016). Specifically, FLE is composed of *FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher* and *FLE-Atmosphere*. The participants scored highest on the second dimension of *FLE-Teacher*, followed by *FLE-Private* and

*FLE-Atmosphere*. Illustrations of these dimensions emerged from the qualitative analyses, which provided a richer picture of students' emotional experience of FLE. The findings also confirmed earlier findings on the crucial role of the teacher in creating a positive classroom atmosphere where learners can blossom and experience FLE (Arnold, 1998; Dewaele et al., 2017; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017). FLE can arise through teachers' direct intervention but also indirectly, by allowing peer interaction and creating a climate where learners can also experience private FLE.

The quantitative and qualitative findings have a number of theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the findings of *FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher*, and *FLE-Atmosphere* indicate that enjoyment is not only influenced by individual subjective experiences, but also by the interpersonal aspects in the given social context of foreign language learning, especially in Chinese culture with its emphasis on group harmony (Kwok et al. 2010).

One of the practical implications of our study is that an understanding of the sources of learners' *FLE-Private*, *FLE-Teacher* and *FLE-Atmosphere* may help Chinese EFL teachers develop effective classroom interventions that foster FLE. For example, teachers may allow more cultural exploration, foreign language use in the form of peer interactions, novel teaching techniques and pedagogical practices, and activities encouraging students' engagement.

Although the present study was situated in a Chinese EFL context, the results have implications for other EFL contexts. Firstly, it demonstrated the importance of validating a translated instrument in a context different than where the original one was developed. Secondly, participants' comments point to both universal and culture-specific aspects of FLE. It is a useful reminder that not only do individual students within a culture have different understandings of what is enjoyable but there are subtle differences between cultures. In other words, teachers need to be aware what their students enjoy in order to boost their motivation and performance.

To conclude, the present study has highlighted the nature of FLE in a Chinese context where teachers play a central role in classroom interactions and in establishing a positive atmosphere that boosts learners' FLE. Individual learners and members of particular cultural groups may have their own unique preferences for enjoying their foreign language classes, but the positive relationship between FLE and self-perceived success in foreign language learning seems to be universal. Further research could explore whether learners' FLE change when they find themselves in a new cultural environment where the social dynamics of the foreign language classroom is different.

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## **Appendix The modified 11-item Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (CFLES)**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly Disagree/ Disagree /Undecided/ Agree /Strongly Agree

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. 我不厌倦英语学习。            | I don't get bored.                            |
| 2. 我享受英语学习。             | I enjoy it.                                   |
| 3. 学英语的过程中，我学到了很多有趣的事情。 | I've learnt interesting things.               |
| 4. 在班里，我为自己的英语成绩感到自豪。   | In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments. |

- |                   |                              |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 5. 周围英语学习的氛围很好。   | It's a positive environment. |
| 6. 学英语很有趣。        | It's fun.                    |
| 7. 老师总是鼓励我们。      | The teacher is encouraging.  |
| 8. 老师很友善。         | The teacher is friendly.     |
| 9. 老师总是支持我们。      | The teacher is supportive.   |
| 10 我身边有很好的英语学习氛围。 | There is a good atmosphere.  |
| 11. 我们有紧密的学习小组。   | We form a tight group.       |

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**Table 1**

Detailed information of participants in three stages

	School	Male	Female	HSS	NS	Mean Age ( <i>SD</i> )	Total	
<b>Stage 1</b>	1ST HS	349	195	154	38	311	16.61 (.75)	
	2ND HS	439	253	186	186	253	16.69 (.75)	1718
	WASC	930	447	483	743	187	16.93 (.75)	
<b>Stage 2</b>	WASC	360	178	182	227	133	16.87 (.74)	360
<b>Stage 3</b>	WASC	64	35	29	20	44	17.74 (.64)	64

*Note:* 1ST HS=No.1 Lu'an High School; 2ND HS=No.2 Lu'an High School; WASC=West Anhui Secondary School; HSS=Humanities and Social Sciences; NS=Natural Science.

**Table 2**

Convergent validity and model fit indicators of each subscales

Factor	Item	Convergent Validity					Model Fit Indicators				
		$\lambda$	<i>p</i>	<i>COM</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>	$\chi^2/df$	<i>p</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>SRMR</i>
<i>FLE-Private</i>	1	.680	.000	.596			2.685	.020	.984	.068	.024
	2	.775	.000	.689							
	3	.715	.000	.603	.502	.833	(13.426/5)				
	4	.585	.000	.508							
	6	.769	.000	.653							
	7	.876	.000	.834			0				
<i>FLE-Teacher</i>	8	.851	.000	.818	.727	.889	(.000/0)	.000	1	.000	.000
	9	.831	.000	.777							
<i>FLE-Atmosphere</i>	5	.777	.000	.785			0	.000	1	.000	.000
	10	.898	.000	.836	.563	.787					
	11	.528	.000	.454							



**Table 3**

Three dimensions of FLE and the number of mentions by the 64 participants

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>FLE-Private</i>	<i>FLE-Teacher</i>	<i>FLE-Atmosphere</i>
Sources	Realization of progress, excellent foreign language performance, pride of pushing one's limits, interest and novelty, positive changes, foreign language use in peer interaction, flow experiences, familiarity of the input	Teacher recognition and support, non-traditional pedagogical practices (e.g. use of multimedia, cultural activities, English songs, role-play)	Teacher-controlled group activities with peers' positive engagement
Frequency of mentions	40	49	25

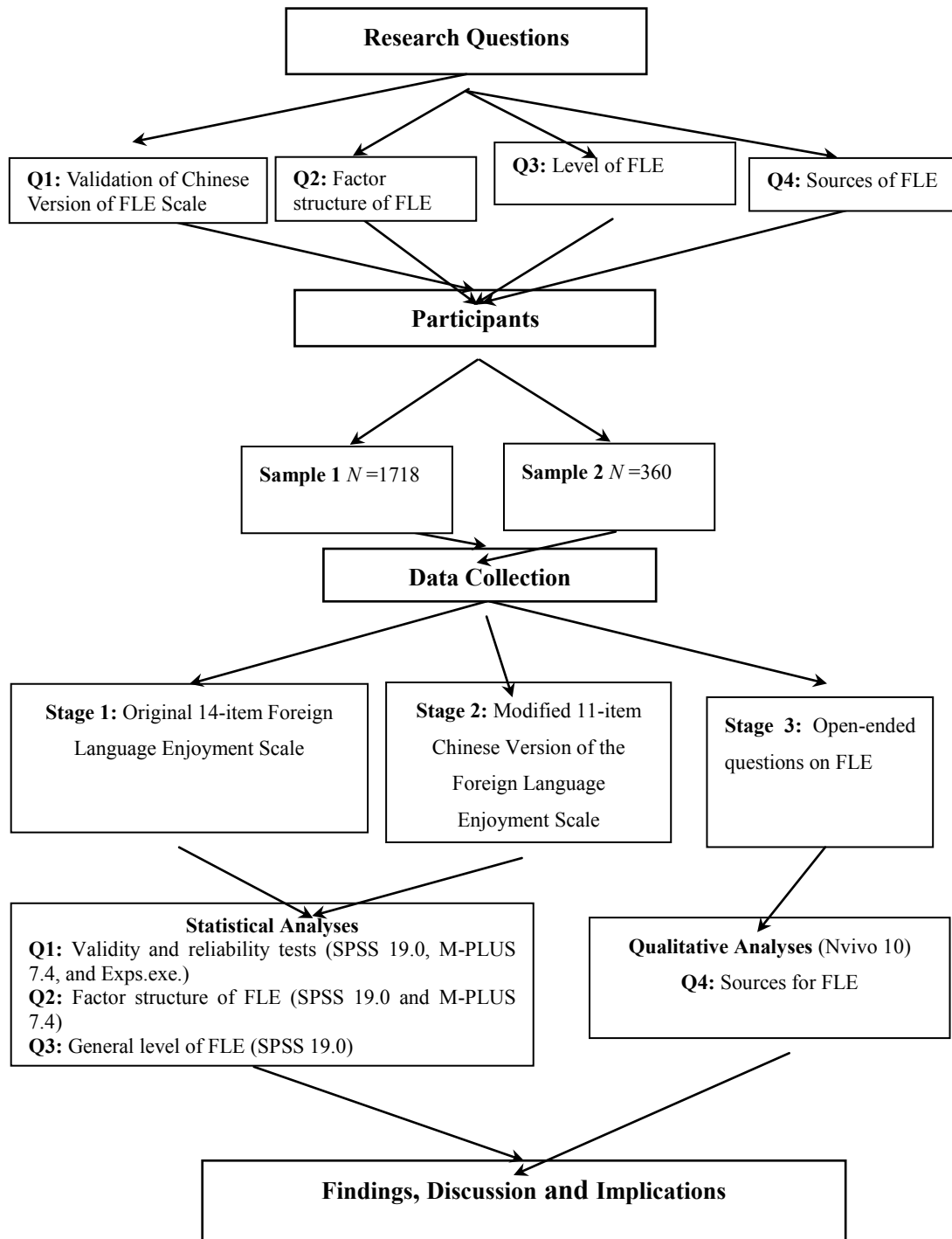
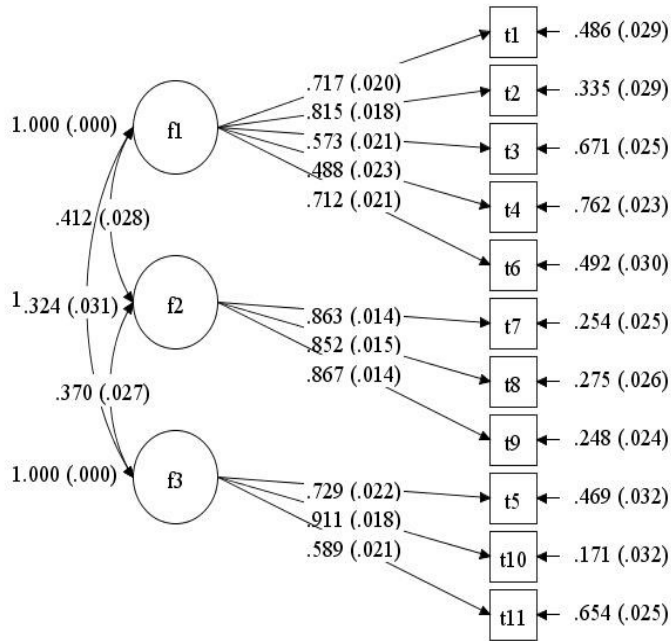
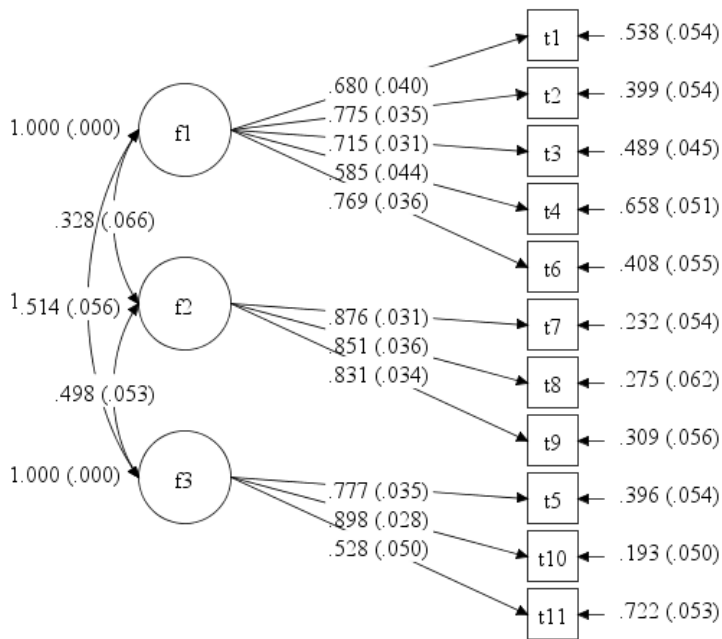


Fig. 1. Research roadmap

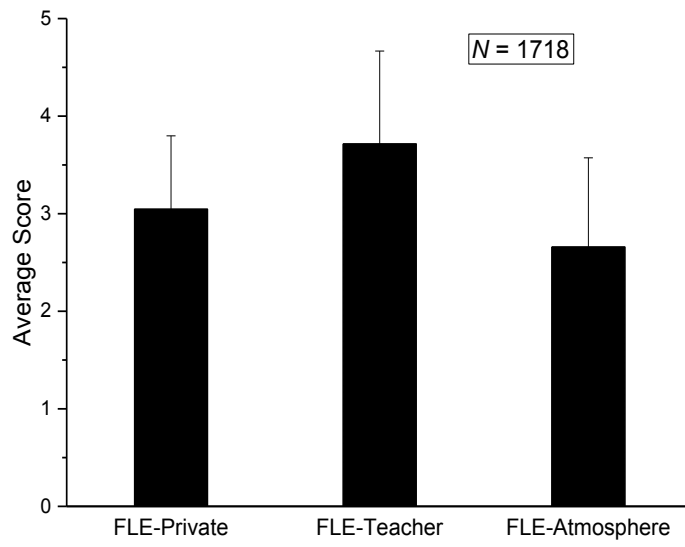




**Fig. 2.** Graphical representation of the three-factor model and factor loadings in the first Confirmatory Factor Analysis



**Fig. 3.** Graphical representation of the three-factor model and factor loadings in the formal Confirmatory Factor Analysis



**Fig. 4.** Profile of Foreign Language Enjoyment (Error bars represent standard deviation.)