

The impact of foreign language enjoyment and engagement on students' learning outcome

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Abstract: The study investigates the role of foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and engagement in the context of English language learning among Chinese students, emphasizing the significance of positive emotions in enhancing academic success. Utilizing a sample of 249 students majoring in international trade, the research employs the foreign language enjoyment scale to count their enjoyment level and foreign language engagement scale to assess various dimensions of student engagement, including cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social engagement. By conducting regression analysis, the findings reveal that FLE positively influencing learners' learning outcome while engagement doesn't pose significant impact on their learning outcome. The study highlights the importance of fostering positive emotions in educational settings to improve language learning outcomes and suggests that understanding the interplay between FLE and other affective factors can lead to more effective teaching strategies in foreign language education.

Keywords: foreign language enjoyment; engagement; learning outcome; international trade students; sustainable education

1. Introduction

With the rise of Positive Psychology Theories, more and more attention has been paid to the effects of positive emotions on people. Scholars have emphasized the importance of focusing on positive human qualities and resources and have suggested that the implementation of positive emotion interventions can improve learners' emotional well-being and academic performance (Huang et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2023). This shows the contribution of positive emotions to students' learning. Pleasure (enjoyment) as a positive emotion has also received wide attention. In this context, foreign language enjoyment (FLE) has become an important affective factor in language learning research (Botes et al., 2022; Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014). As the antithesis of foreign language anxiety (FLA), FLE represents an important positive emotion in the language learning process. Research has found that FLE is influenced by a variety of factors, including teacher behavior, learners' prior language learning experiences, learners' multilingualism, and self-perceived proficiency in a foreign language (Botes et al., 2020; Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016; Saito et al., 2018). In addition, FLE not only reflects learners' learning experience, but also has a significant effect on foreign language learning outcomes, with FLE contributing more to learning

outcomes than FLCA inhibiting them (Dewaele and Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele and Dewaele, 2018; Saito et al., 2018; Shirvan et al., 2021).

Complementing this, Engagement Theory highlights the importance of active involvement—behavioral, emotional, and cognitive—in achieving academic success (Martin and Bolliger, 2018; Trowler et al., 2022). Engagement not only enhances learning outcomes directly but also mediates the influence of positive emotions like enjoyment on academic performance. Together, these theories suggest that FLE, as a positive emotional state, can enhance engagement, which in turn contributes to better learning outcomes. This theoretical foundation underpins the study's core hypothesis: that FLE and engagement are interrelated and jointly influence students' academic success. Engaged students are more motivated to learn and learn better. Engagement can be conceptualized as the amount of time and effort that learners spend on activities that experience has shown to produce desired learning outcomes, as well as initiatives taken by educational institutions to motivate and enhance student engagement (Astin, 1999; HEFCE, 2008; Hu and Kuh, 2001; Kuh, 2009; Trowler, 2010). Fredricks et al. (2004) provide a useful framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of student engagement, including behavioral, affective, and cognitive dimensions. In addition, research has shown that the social environment of the classroom and FLE are important predictors of their level of participation and engagement (Hosseini et al., 2022).

Although the relationship between FLE and learning outcomes has been extensively explored by researchers in recent years, few studies have focused on the intrinsic link between FLE and student engagement. Student engagement is an important factor affecting learning outcomes and requires further in-depth research. Most of the existing studies adopt qualitative or correlational research methods, but lack quantitative research. Quantitative research can better validate the relationship between FLE, engagement and learning outcomes, and analyze the mechanism of these variables, which is of great significance for improving teaching practice. Therefore, this study intends to adopt quantitative research methods to explore the relationship between engagement, FLE and learning outcomes of international trade majors, and to analyze the correlation between them and their impact on learning outcomes. This will make up for the limitations of existing studies and provide new research perspectives and practical insights for improving the quality of students' foreign language learning.

2. Literature review

2.1. Foreign language enjoyment

Foreign language enjoyment (FLE) has emerged as a critical affective factor in language learning research in recent years. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) were pioneering in proposing the concept of FLE and examining it in relation to the more widely studied foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). Their research with 1746 language learners highlighted how different learning environments, teachers, and classmates can shape the emotional experiences and reactions of learners. Botes et al. (2020) further conceptualized FLE as a positive emotional state that can fulfill the learner's psychological needs, such as coping with challenges, expanding knowledge,

and improving proficiency. As the counterpart to foreign language anxiety (FLA), FLE represents a crucial positive emotion in the language learning process.

Research has found that FLE is influenced by a variety of factors. Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2016) work emphasized the central role of teacher behavior in shaping FLE. Additionally, Saito et al. (2018) found that learners' prior language learning experiences also impact FLE levels, expanding our understanding of the antecedents of this positive emotion. Botes et al. (2020) uncovered an interactive effect between learners' multilingual proficiency and self-perceived foreign language competence, with higher multilingual skills being associated with greater FLE and lower FLCA. Other potential influencing factors may include learner characteristics (e.g., personality traits, learning styles), classroom dynamics, and the overall learning environment. Further exploring how these factors shape FLE will help us better understand its formation mechanism.

Research also indicates that FLE not only reflects the learner's learning experience, but also has a significant impact on foreign language learning outcomes. Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) found that FLCA inhibits learners' willingness to communicate, while FLE does not have an equivalent enhancing effect. Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) further found that the facilitating effect of FLE on learning outcomes is greater than the inhibiting effect of FLCA. Saito et al. (2018) also discovered that learners with higher FLE levels perform better in language learning, supporting the positive influence of FLE on foreign language learning outcomes. Shirvan et al.'s (2021) longitudinal study found that learners with initially higher FLE levels showed little change over time, while those with initially lower FLE levels showed significant improvement, indicating the stability and malleability of FLE levels, which holds implications for future teaching practices.

In summary, as a positive emotional factor, FLE not only reflects the learner's learning experience, but also has a significant influence on foreign language learning outcomes. Future research should further explore the formation mechanism of FLE and improve learners' FLE levels through teaching practice to enhance the overall effectiveness of foreign language learning.

2.2. Engagement

Student engagement has rightly become a major priority and focus in higher education. Engaged students are more motivated and get better learning outcomes (Trowler et al., 2022). Engagement is important for students to successfully participate in discussions, group projects, and other collaborative learning activities (Martin and Bolliger, 2018).

The concept of engagement was first defined by Astin (1999) as 'the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience.' Later on, Hu and Kuh (2001) indicated that engagement has been defined as the level of effort students invest in educational activities that are meant to lead directly to desired learning outcomes. An alternative view defines engagement as the process where higher education institutions and organizations intentionally involve and empower students to work actively in influencing their learning experience (HEFCE, 2008). Synthesizing these approaches, one definition proposed by Kuh

(2009) describes student engagement as the time and effort expended by learners on activities empirically shown to produce intended college outcomes. It also encompasses what institutions do to motivate participation in such activities. By combining the perspectives of positioning students as partners in shaping their path, while acknowledging the need for structured support of proven practices, this definition presents a balanced approach regarding the interaction and initiatives undertaken by both parties that comprise student engagement. It links engagement to measuring accomplishments rather than viewing involvement alone as the goal.

Trowler et al. (2022) argued that engagement focuses on the interaction and investment of time, effort, and other available resources by both students and educational institutions. The goal is to optimize the overall experience for students by improving learning outcomes, development, performance levels, and reputation.

Fredricks et al. (2004) provide a useful framework for conceptualizing student engagement, identifying three key dimensions. First, behavioral engagement refers to involvement in academic, social or extracurricular activities. This includes aspects like attendance, participation, and positive conduct. The second dimension is emotional engagement, encompassing students' emotions like interest, belonging or value placed on learning. Students who are emotionally engaged feel personally invested in activities and their development. The third dimension outlined is cognitive engagement, involving the psychological effort students dedicate to comprehending complex ideas, mastering difficult skills and skills. This relates to investment of effort in learning and willingness to exert mental energy on challenging tasks. By breaking engagement into these three overlapping parts, they provide a framework still widely referenced today for considering the multidimensional nature of student involvement.

Scholars have identified multiple dimensions of student engagement, each of which can manifest in either a positive or negative form. Between these poles exists a state of disengagement or withdrawal. The terms "positive" and "negative" refer to the implied attitude. A student's participation may occur positively or negatively across cognitive, emotional and behavioral domains. It is feasible for involvement in one dimension to align with the positive pole, while another accords with the negative.

2.3. Learning outcome

In this study, learning outcomes are defined as the level of English proficiency achieved by students after a period of English language education. Drawing on the work of Pontefract and Wilson (2019), learning outcomes are categorized as: communication ability in English, encompassing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

However, the understanding of English proficiency extends beyond just communication skills. Rather, it is viewed as a tool that helps break down barriers, facilitates interpersonal interactions, and enables students to shape their attitudes and behaviors when collaborating with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Sylwia et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated the significant influence of English as a global language on the policies and practices of Asian Pacific countries, including China (Nunan, 2003).

In China's higher education system, English has assumed an important position in recent years as globalization and international exchange have intensified. However, China's higher English education faces numerous challenges and issues stemming from the impact of an examination-oriented educational approach.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The survey was administered to a sample of undergraduate students majoring in international trade in China, using a convenience sampling approach. The participant group consisted of students with business knowledge and communication skills. Most of the students were familiar with, or even enthusiastic about, popular cultures in Western countries.

In June 2024, an online questionnaire was distributed to the participants, providing information about the study's content and objectives. The students signed informed consent forms before answering the questions, and the study followed the principle of confidentiality. This study adhered to strict ethical standards to ensure the rights and well-being of all participants were protected. Prior to the survey, participants were provided with a detailed explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, and their role in the research.

A total of 275 responses were received, with 249 deemed valid after removing incomplete surveys. The mean age of the participants was 24.71 years old, with 81 males and 194 females. The gender distribution was noticeably imbalanced, which is a common phenomenon in Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) and other foreign language studies, where female students typically outnumber males (Xu et al., 2022). However, the SPSS 27.0.1.0 analysis showed that gender did not have a significant influence on the study results.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Foreign language engagement scale

The Foreign Language Engagement Scale is a self-report measure designed to assess four key dimensions of student engagement in English language learning: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, and social engagement.

The scale consists of 15 items, with each dimension represented by 3–4 statements. Respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "Totally disagree" and 5 represents "Totally agree".

The cognitive engagement dimension examines the learner's mental investment, focus, and self-regulation in English learning activities. Sample items include "I concentrate hard when studying English" and "I put a lot of effort into understanding new English concepts".

The emotional engagement dimension captures the learner's positive feelings, attitudes, and interest toward English learning. Example items are "I enjoy the

challenge of English learning” and “I feel enthusiastic about improving my English skills”.

The behavioral engagement dimension assesses the learner’s active participation, effort, and persistence in English learning tasks. Statements such as “I always complete my English assignments on time” and “I actively participate in English class activities” represent this dimension.

The social engagement dimension evaluates the learner’s involvement in English-mediated social interactions and collaborative learning experiences. Items like “I like to work with other students on English projects” and “I engage in discussions with my English teacher” reflect this aspect of engagement.

This multidimensional scale provides a comprehensive assessment of students’ cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social engagement in the process of English language learning. The scale has been developed and validated in the Chinese context, making it a relevant and reliable instrument for measuring English learning engagement among Chinese students (Li et al., 2023).

The overall Foreign Language Engagement Scale demonstrates strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.91. These high reliability coefficients indicate that the scale items reliably measure the intended construct of foreign language engagement as a whole.

Overall, the reliability and validity results provide robust psychometric support for the Foreign Language Engagement Scale. The high internal consistency and strong factor structure of the scale, particularly in the behavioral, cognitive, and social engagement dimensions, make it a reliable and valid instrument for assessing foreign language engagement among the target population.

3.2.2. Foreign language enjoyment scale

The Chinese version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale is a 11-item self-report measure that assesses three key dimensions of foreign language enjoyment: FLE-Private, FLE-Teacher, and FLE-Atmosphere. Respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents “Totally disagree” and 5 represents “Totally agree”.

The FLE-Private dimension (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6) examines the learner’s personal enjoyment and positive emotions associated with the foreign language learning process. Sample items include “I feel like myself when I use English” and “I enjoy the challenge of understanding complex grammar”.

The FLE-Teacher dimension (items 7, 8, 9) captures the learner’s enjoyment stemming from the behaviors, instructional approaches, and interpersonal relationships with the foreign language teacher. Statements such as “The teacher makes the English class interesting” and “The teacher is enthusiastic, which boosts my enjoyment” represent this dimension.

The FLE-Atmosphere dimension (items 5, 10, 11) assesses the learner’s enjoyment of the overall classroom environment and social dynamics during foreign language lessons. Items like “The English class atmosphere is pleasant” and “The other students in my English class are supportive” reflect this aspect of enjoyment.

This multidimensional FLE Scale has been validated for use with Chinese high school students, as demonstrated Li et al. (2018). The robust psychometric properties

of the scale make it a reliable and valid instrument for measuring the various facets of foreign language enjoyment among the target population.

3.2.3. Foreign language learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are defined as the level of English proficiency achieved by students after a period of English language education. The learning outcomes were measured by the students’ self-reported grades in their university-level English courses. Participants were asked to indicate their actual course grades, which served as the indicator of their foreign language learning achievement. These grades were reported on a standardized numeric scale (e.g., 0–100), where higher scores reflected better academic achievement. For consistency, participants from different institutions with varying grading systems were asked to convert their grades into the standardized format provided in the survey instructions. This self-reported measure of academic performance in English subjects has been commonly used in previous studies examining the relationship between affective factors and learning outcomes (Caspersen et al., 2017). By using students’ own assessment of their English course grades, this approach provides a straightforward and reliable representation of their language learning success.

The use of self-reported grades as the measure of learning outcomes is appropriate within the context of this study, as it directly captures the students’ academic achievement in the target foreign language. This subjective but realistic indicator aligns with the focus on understanding the interplay between factors like foreign language enjoyment, engagement, and the ultimate learning success experienced by the participants.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive analysis

The analysis of the data in this study shows that the scale’s reliability is strong, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.838, indicating high internal consistency. The KMO value of 0.937, along with the significance of Bartlett’s test, suggests that the data is suitable for factor analysis. Descriptive statistics revealed that the mean Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) score was 3.8688 (SD = 0.76396), while the mean Engagement score was 3.2846 (SD = 0.63509). There was a significant positive correlation between FLE and Engagement ($r = 0.622, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher enjoyment in language learning is associated with greater engagement (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Descriptive results.

	M	SD	FLE	Engagement
FLE	3.8688	0.76396	-	
Engagement	3.2846	0.63509	0.622**	-

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

4.2. Regression analysis

Regression analysis further examined the impact of FLE and Engagement on academic performance. The results showed that FLE had a significant positive effect

on grades ($\beta = 0.128, p = 0.014$), meaning that higher enjoyment leads to better academic performance. However, Engagement did not have a significant impact on grades ($\beta = 0.057, p = 0.358$), suggesting that while engagement contributes to the learning experience, its direct effect on grades is minimal.

Overall, FLE is an important predictor of academic success in language learning, while the role of Engagement may require further exploration. The regression equation is as follows:

$$Grade = 2.898 + 0.128 \times FLE + 0.057 \times Engagement$$

These findings highlight the importance of enjoyment in the learning process and suggest that future research could explore the nuanced relationship between engagement and academic outcomes (Table 2).

Table 2. Regression results.

Model	β	t	p
(Constant)	2.898	12.246	< 0.001
FLE	0.128	2.469	0.014
Engagement	0.057	0.921	0.358

Dependent variable: learning outcome.

To further ensure the reliability of these scales in our study, we conducted an additional reliability analysis. The Cronbach’s alpha for the FLE Scale in this study was 0.88, and for the Engagement Scale, it was 0.91, corroborating the scales’ internal consistency. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using principal axis factoring with varimax rotation to examine the underlying structure of the FLE Scale and the Engagement Scale. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity were performed to ensure that the data were suitable for factor analysis. The KMO value for the FLE Scale was 0.87, and for the Engagement Scale, it was 0.90, both indicating strong sampling adequacy. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity for both scales were significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that the data were appropriate for factor analysis.

5. Discussion

5.1. The impacts of FLE on learning outcome

We first examined the FLE and LE of ITC students. Respondents reported a mean FLE of 3.8688, which is comparable to and slightly higher than the mean (3.82) reported by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) for the international sample. This suggests that ITC students enjoy their English language learning, which may be due to the fact that the participating students are equipped with English language business knowledge and communication skills, as noted by Botes et al. (2020) the increase in self-perceived proficiency in a foreign language leads to an increase in FLE. In addition, the FLE level was higher than that of Guo’s (2021) study of non-English major college students, which further validated that the higher the self-perceived foreign language proficiency, the higher the FLE.

Regression analysis further explored the effects of foreign language enjoyment and engagement on academic performance. The results showed that foreign language enjoyment had a significant positive predictive effect on academic performance, i.e., the higher the foreign language enjoyment, the better the students' academic performance. The positive correlation between FLE and academic performance also verified Jin and Zhang's (2018) study, in which they found that the FLE factor of "enjoying learning a foreign language" directly affected students' midterm English scores. Botes et al. (2022) also confirmed that the FLE factor of "enjoying learning a foreign language" directly affected students' midterm English scores. Xu et al. (2022) also confirmed that there is a moderate positive correlation between FLE and academic performance and self-perceived achievement. In addition, some studies have surfaced that in addition to the direct effect of FLE on academic achievement, FLE can also affect academic achievement through mediating variables. For example, Jin and Zhang's (2018) path analysis found that the two FLE factors of "enjoying teacher support" and "enjoying student support" can indirectly affect students' language achievement through "enjoying foreign language learning", which suggests that the facilitating effect of FLE on academic achievement is partly realized through enhancing students' sense of support for teachers and peers. Numerous studies have demonstrated the important role of teacher factors on FLE (Ahmadi-Azad et al., 2020; Dewaele and Dewaele 2017; Dewaele et al., 2017). FLE significantly predicts learners' actual and self-perceived achievement, reflecting the positive impact of FLE on the learning process and learning outcomes (Wang and Li, 2022). Alberth (2022) suggested that FLE is a stronger positive predictor compared to anxiety. This suggests that in foreign language learning, developing students' FLE is more conducive to enhancing academic performance than reducing anxiety. Therefore, enhancing students' FLE can directly or indirectly promote their foreign language learning performance.

However, Guo (2021) concluded that the correlation between FLE and participants' academic performance was low. This may be caused by the fact that grades in that study were not reported according to exact scores, but rather on a 4-point scale, and this coarse-grained grading of grades may have blurred the differentiation of grades and made it difficult to accurately reflect the relationship between FLE and grades.

5.2. Positive correlation between FLE and engagement

The mean overall learner engagement reported by the participants in this study was 3.2846, with significantly lower subject engagement and lower than the mean academic engagement of a sample of high school students ($M = 3.46$) reported by Zhao and Yang (2022), which may have been caused by the fact that Chinese high schools, under the pressure of the gaokao exams, had higher levels of student engagement instead.

Correlation analyses revealed a significant positive correlation between FLE and engagement ($r = 0.622, p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher FLE is associated with higher engagement. Students' emotional experience largely determines their engagement in learning. Pekrun and Linnenbrink (2012) emphasized the need to regulate students'

emotional states in a timely manner in order to enhance their classroom engagement. Teacher behavior is an important factor in regulating students' emotions, and when students feel more enthusiastic teachers, they are more likely to have positive emotional experiences, such as pleasantness, and thus be more engaged in the classroom (Dewaele and Li, 2021; Sadoughi and Hejazi, 2022). Guo's (2021) study further found that there was a bidirectional causal relationship, i.e., enhancing students' positive emotional experience helps promote their more active participation in learning, and conversely students' active participation enhances their sense of pleasure, forming a virtuous cycle. Students' own experience of pleasure directly contributes to their engagement, and Hosseini et al. (2022) found that FLE significantly predicted students' engagement, which validates the contribution of positive psychology in L2 teaching and learning, i.e., students are more likely to participate actively in learning activities when they can feel pleasure and positive emotions about the learning situation. Zhao and Yang (2022) showed that there is a significant positive correlation between students' pleasure and engagement, and that students are more likely to participate in classroom activities when they are more in control of their learning and feel happy. Students' emotional experience, especially pleasure, is a key factor affecting learning engagement. Teachers should emphasize the importance of cultivating positive emotions and creating enjoyable learning experiences for students so that they can participate more actively in the learning process.

5.3. The impact of engagement on learning outcome

The non-significant effect of engagement on learning outcome suggests that although engagement may contribute to the learning experience, the direct correlation between engagement and learning outcome is not very clear. Guo (2021) found that the correlation between engagement and students' achievement was low. Abubakar, Abubakar and Itse (2017) also pointed out that most of the measures of engagement have weak correlation with desired academic achievement with weak co-relationship. This suggests that simply increasing students' engagement does not necessarily lead directly to improved performance.

On the other hand, there are also studies that suggest that engagement has a significant impact on learning outcome. Finn and Zimmer (2012) suggest that engagement is critical to learning. McClenney et al. (2012) also suggest that higher levels of engagement are more likely to lead to the attainment of academic goals. Lee (2013) found that both behavioral and affective engagement significantly predicted learning outcome. Emotional engagement was both significant predictors of learning outcome. Courtner (2014) was more direct in stating that the level of student engagement can significantly affect learning outcome.

These results suggest that although the relationship between engagement and learning outcome is not simple and direct, engagement remains a key factor in learning outcome. It may contribute to learning outcome indirectly through mechanisms such as students' behavioral and emotional engagement in learning. The complex relationship between engagement and learning outcome needs to be further explored.

5.4. Internationalization of higher education in China

The engagement of students from the perspective of FLE bears significance on policy for internationalization as well as sustainable development of higher education in China. The English language has remained the primary second language across the globe during this age of globalization. Therefore, students who are pursuing courses related to international business need to have a thorough understanding of the language. FLE boosts performance in the current study, which suggests that enjoyment is an important component of achieving the objective of Chinese education, which is to prepare students to work together and communicate with people from other cultures. In doing so, through the encouragement of positive interaction between students and instructors in class and creating a conducive learning environment that promotes FLE, more students in higher education institutions in China will be proficient in communication and adaptability in international interactions, thus improving their FLE.

Further, SDG 4 as framed by UNESCO requires university students to participate in the teaching and learning processes, since this is essential to the sustainability of higher education. Even though the present research could not assert the existence of a direct linear link between engagement and learning outcomes, the positive association of FLE and engagement suggests that engagement can be increased by evoking positive emotions from the students through active collaborative and global discourse. In particular, the social element, such as peer interaction, contributes to the sustainability of a learning environment by promoting an active involvement of students in the academic community and their ability to solve problems that face the world.

For China to fully benefit from FLE and engagement, several practical actions can be taken. Through teacher training and collaborative learning activities, institutions may be able to increase the enjoyment and engagement of foreign language courses through the integration of positive psychology. Additionally, by designing syllabuses that encourage students to develop cross-cultural communication skills and to speak multiple languages, students will be able to pursue international careers geared towards ensuring China's sustainability. By creating positive, engaged, and global environments within the Chinese higher education system, the internationalization of these institutions will be enhanced, thus contributing to the sustainability of global education systems.

5.5. Methodological limitations

As a result of self-reported data, both engagement levels and learning outcomes (grades) were assessed. Self-reported data can be influenced by biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may respond in ways they believe are expected or favorable. To mitigate this, we ensured anonymity of responses and stressed that there was no "right" or "wrong" answer to the questions. In the future, however, studies may incorporate more objective measures, such as teacher assessments or standardized test scores, to validate the findings. Moreover, this study employed convenience sampling, which may limit the representativeness of the sample. The participants were drawn from a specific group of international trade students in China, which may not be

representative of the diversity of learners in other contexts or disciplines. Due to this potential sampling bias, the results cannot be generalized. To increase the external validity of future research, random sampling techniques may be utilized or participants may be recruited from a broader range of academic fields and geographical locations. The inference of causality between FLE, engagement, and learning outcomes is limited by the use of a cross-sectional design. To understand how these variables interact over time and whether changes in FLE or engagement lead to measurable differences in academic performance, longitudinal studies would be beneficial.

The study's sole reliance on quantitative data from self-reported surveys presents a limitation, as while the scales for measuring foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and engagement have been validated, self-reported data may not fully capture the complexity of students' experiences. Future research should use a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative findings with qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, to gain deeper insights. Besides validating the results, this triangulation would provide insight into the specific factors influencing FLE and engagement, as well as their impact on academic performance. Developing a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between enjoyment, engagement, and learning outcomes can be enhanced by integrating qualitative data, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the study.

6. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the critical role of FLE in enhancing students' academic performance in foreign language learning. The findings indicate that FLE not only contributes positively to learners' emotional well-being but also serves as a significant predictor of academic success. However, the study didn't find significant impact of engagement on learning outcome. The research underscores the necessity for educators to create supportive and enjoyable learning environments that foster positive emotions among students. By focusing on enhancing FLE through effective teaching practices, such as engaging instructional methods and supportive teacher-student relationships, educators can significantly improve students' language learning experiences and outcomes. However, the study is not without limitations. First, the study only examined the impact of positive emotional factors like FLE but did not take into account negative emotions such as anxiety and stress that could also influence learning outcomes. Second, important contextual variables like individual abilities and family background that may affect academic performance were not fully controlled in the research design, which could compromise the reliability of conclusions. Third, the assessment of learning outcomes was likely focused on language test scores but ignored the evaluation of practical language application abilities and long-term retention. Lastly, cross-cultural perspectives were lacking from the study, and more research is warranted to examine how the impact mechanism of FLE may differ across cultural contexts. Therefore, the study calls for further research to explore the mechanisms through which FLE influences learning and to develop strategies that can effectively integrate positive emotional factors into language education.

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