



Foreign Language Enjoyment, Foreign Language Anxiety, and Achievement in an EFL Course at a Korean University*

Christopher Gordon

University of Ulsan

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to discover if there are relationships among Korean university students' emotions of foreign language anxiety (FLA), foreign language enjoyment (FLE), and foreign language achievement and if those relationships were affected by gender. The 456 participants completed shortened versions of the foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) and the foreign language enjoyment scale (FLES). Correlation analyses show that FLE is significantly and positively correlated with foreign language achievement and that FLA is significantly and negatively linked to foreign language achievement. Multiple regression analyses further revealed that FLE exerts a stronger influence on foreign language achievement than FLA, and, interestingly, the effect of FLE is greater for male students, which suggests that male students earned much lower grades when their FLE is low while the difference is much smaller for female students. The results of this study bear important implications for English education, suggesting that to improve foreign language achievement, English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors should strive to lower the FLA and increase the FLE of their students and that the role of FLE can be significantly more important for male students in Korea.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the language learning process, learners experience a wide variety of emotions. In the past, researchers have focused more on the role that negative emotions play in learning a second language, with anxiety being the negative emotion that has been investigated the most (Dewaele & Macintyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2019). Positive Psychology has changed the perspective that researchers have taken when studying emotions in the second language learning process, by shifting the focus away from studying only negative emotions to a study that also considers the impact of positive emotions (Dewaele et al., 2018). In re-

cent years, more researchers have taken a holistic view of emotions in the second language learning process (Dewaele & Macintyre, 2014, 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2016), with the negative emotion of foreign language anxiety often being studied alongside the positive emotion of foreign language enjoyment (e.g., Boudreau et al., 2018; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Elahi Shirvan & Talebzadeh, 2020; Pan & Zhang, 2021; Su, 2022).

Dewaele and Macintyre (2014) recommend that researchers should examine both positive and negative emotions in the same study, to get a better understanding of the relationship between these emotions and the learning of a foreign language. One area that has interested researchers

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Christopher Gordon (Assistant Professor)

Department of General Education, University of Ulsan, 93 Daehak-ro, Mugeo-dong, Nam-gu, Ulsan, 44610, South Korea

Email: gordon@ulsan.ac.kr / ISNI: 0000 0005 0940 202X

is the relationship between foreign language anxiety, foreign language enjoyment, and foreign language achievement (e.g., Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2022; Li et al., 2019; Liu & Wang, 2021). The results of the studies that have been conducted on the relationships between foreign language anxiety, foreign language enjoyment, and foreign language achievement have produced different findings. Some studies have discovered that foreign language anxiety (FLA) and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) both affect foreign language achievement with FLE having a stronger effect (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Özer & Altay, 2021). Different studies found that FLA had a stronger influence on foreign language achievement (Dewaele & Proietti Ergün, 2020; Dewaele et al., 2022; Li et al., 2019; Yang, 2021). It has been suggested that the relationship between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement may differ depending on the cultural context of the study (Liu & Wang, 2021). As there has been a lack of studies that have looked at the relationship between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement conducted in a Korean context, it is unknown how FLA and FLE impact foreign language achievement in a Korean context. This means that educators in Korea do not know how reducing or increasing either of these emotions influences the language achievement of their students.

In addition to the relationship between FLA, FLE, and achievement, the effect that gender has on FLA and FLE, is a topic that researchers have investigated (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Özer & Altay, 2021; Yang, 2021). Most of the studies that have examined the role of gender on FLA and FLE have focused on the difference in the levels of FLA and FLE in male and female language learners (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Özer & Altay, 2021). Few studies, if any, have been done on the influence that gender has over the relationship between FLA and foreign language achievement, and the relationship between FLE and achievement in a Korean context.

This study will thus investigate the relationship between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement among students taking a compulsory English Communication course at a university in Korea. This study also aims to discover if gender influences the relationships between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement. The results of this study can inform the way that instructors teach Korean students by providing an understanding of how using teaching strategies to increase or decrease FLE and/or FLA could affect their students' language achievement.

The research questions that will guide this study are as follows:

- 1) Is there a relationship between FLA and FLE, between FLA and FL achievement, and between FLE and FL achievement among Korean university students, respectively? If so, is the relationship positive or negative?
- 2) Does gender influence the relationship between FLA and FL achievement, and between FLE and FL achievement among Korean university students?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Foreign Language Anxiety

Arguably, the negative emotion that has been investigated the most in the field of second language education is anxiety (Teimouri et al., 2019). Early research on anxiety in second language learning was in a confounded phase, as various types of anxiety were investigated, and the types of anxiety investigated were not always applicable to language learning (Macintyre, 2017). In 1986, a seminal work by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope clearly defined the concept of FLA and gave researchers an effective instrument for measuring foreign language classroom anxiety. The instrument created by Horwitz et al. (1986) is called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and since its creation, it has been used to study foreign language classroom anxiety in a variety of contexts from all over the world (see, e.g., Gawi, 2020; Gordon, 2021; Jin & Dewaele, 2018; Ozer & Ispinar Akçayoglu, 2021; E. S. Park, 2008).

The FLCAS has been used by researchers to get a better understanding of FLA and how it impacts foreign language learning. Many studies have examined how different variables affect levels of FLA. Studies have investigated how variables including, gender (Basco & Han, 2016; Bensalem, 2019; Huang & Hwang, 2013; Park & French, 2013), major (Gordon, 2021; Tien, 2018), year in university (Basco & Han, 2016; Gordon, 2021), experience abroad (Bensalem, 2019; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004), perceived social support (Jin & Dewaele, 2018), and self-perceived proficiency (Bensalem, 2019) have on FLA. In addition to exploring how certain variables influence FLA, researchers have also been interested in how FLA affects foreign language achievement.

In the past ten years, there have been several studies that have examined the link between FLA and foreign language performance (Dikmen, 2021). A recent study by Ozer & Ispinar Akçayoglu (2021) found that the level of FLA is a significant predictor of achievement in the foreign language classroom, where achievement decreases as the levels of anxiety increase. In a meta-analysis of studies conducted on the association between FLA and foreign language achievement, Teimouri et al. (2019) found that most studies indicated that anxiety has a negative association with foreign language achievement. In their meta-analysis looking at the association between FLA and foreign language achievement, Dikmen (2021) discovered that overall, studies found that FLA has a medium negative effect on foreign-language performance.

2. Foreign Language Enjoyment

Studies on emotions in the second language learning process have overwhelmingly focused on the role of negative emotions. The influence of the Positive Psychology movement has altered the way that emotions in second language learning have been studied (Zeng, 2021). As part of the Positive Psychology movement, Frederickson's (2001)

Broaden-and-Build theory explains the numerous benefits of positive emotions, which include helping to overcome the negative effects of negative emotions, increasing psychological fortitude, and prompting an increase in emotional well-being. In their seminal work, Dewaele and Macintyre (2014) grounded their research on the Broaden-and-Build theory. Dewaele and Macintyre (2014) created the foreign language enjoyment scale (FLES) and used it in conjunction with the FLCAS to show that FLA and FLE are two distinct dimensions, in that, an increase in FLE does not necessarily result in a decrease in FLA, and vice versa.

Research that has looked at the role that FLE plays in learning a foreign language has identified numerous benefits that FLE can have for foreign language learners. Dewaele et al. (2018) found a link between students having higher levels of FLE and them having more positive attitudes toward the language they are learning, their language instructor, their use of the foreign language, and their proficiency in the language. Several studies that have been conducted outside of Korea have found that there is also a link between higher levels of FLE in foreign language learners and foreign language achievement (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Li et al., 2019; Liu & Wang, 2021; Özer & Altay, 2021).

3. FLA, FLE, and Achievement

One study that was conducted in the U.K. and in Saudi Arabia, concluded that both FLE and FLA influenced foreign language achievement, but the impact of FLE was greater (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). Özer & Altay (2021) discovered the same result in a Turkish context with both emotions impacting achievement but FLE having a greater effect. Studies that were set in a Chinese context concluded that both FLE and FLA influenced foreign language achievement, but the impact of FLA was greater (Li et al., 2019; Yang, 2021). Finally, in a study that had participants from all over the world, it was found that only FLA influenced foreign language achievement, whereas FLE did not act as a significant predictor of foreign language achievement (Dewaele et al., 2022). While educators are aware of the relationships between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement, results are not conclusive as to if reducing or increasing either of these emotions is an effective way of improving foreign language achievement. At the moment there is a lack of information on the relationship between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement in a Korean context. This study fills a gap in the literature by aiming to discover if there is a relationship between FLE, FLA, and foreign language achievement among students studying English as a foreign language at a university in Korea.

A major difference between the studies that have been done on the relationship between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement is the cultural contexts of the study. Liu and Wang (2021) stated that the relative effects of negative and positive emotions might well differ depending on the cultural contexts of the study. This study will thus investigate the relationship between FLA, FLE, and foreign

language achievement among students taking a compulsory English Communication course at a university in Korea.

4. FLA, FLE, and Gender

The results of studies that have examined the relationship between gender and FLA and FLE have been varied. Results have shown that females have had higher levels of FLE and FLA (Dewaele et al., 2018), females had higher levels of FLA but no significant difference in FLE (Dewaele & Macintyre, 2019), and studies have shown that there are no significant differences between male and female learners for either FLA or FLE (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Özer & Altay, 2021). A study by Yang (2021) discovered that in a Chinese context, gender did not have a significant effect on FLA, FLE, or foreign language achievement.

There has been a lack of studies in Korea that have looked at the way that gender affects the relationship between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement. This study will thus fill that gap by investigating if gender influences the relationship between FLA and foreign language achievement, and between FLE and foreign language achievement among Korean university students.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

A total of thirteen EFL instructors at a university in Korea gave their permission for their students to be invited to take part in this study. More than 3,000 students were told about the research and given the link to the survey. The participants in this study were 456 students who voluntarily chose to complete the online survey. They were all taking a required English Communication course at a university in Korea. They were made up of 229 males and 227 females who were majoring in a variety of different subjects at the university. Four hundred and fourteen were in their first year at university and the remaining 42 were in their second, third, and fourth years. Overall, the students had varying levels of English proficiency.

2. Instrument

Data were collected through a three-part online survey. In each part of the survey, the items were written in both English and Korean to ensure that the participants could clearly understand the survey. The online survey began by asking if the participants gave their permission for the researcher to collect their final grades for the English Communication course and for the researcher to use the information collected through the survey for research purposes. Part one of the survey also required the participants to provide their student numbers and identify their gender.

The purpose of the second part of the survey was to investigate participants' levels of FLE and the purpose of the third part of the survey was to discover the participants'

levels of FLA. The foreign language enjoyment part of the survey was made up of ten items that originally came from Dewaele and Macintyre’s (2014) foreign language enjoyment scale. All of the items on the foreign language enjoyment scale part of the survey were phrased positively. An analysis of the data showed that the FLES part of the survey had high internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha score of 0.89. This is similar to the Cronbach alpha of 0.88 found in the study conducted by Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018).

The purpose of the third part of the survey was to discover the participants’ levels of FLA. The third section of the survey contained statements from the foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) created by Horwitz et al. (1986). The eight items from the foreign language anxiety scale were chosen from the original FLCAS as they are concerned with the physical expressions of anxiety, nervousness, and a lack of confidence (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). An analysis of the FLCAS part of the survey revealed that it had a high internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.90. The Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) study also found that the FLCAS part of the survey had a high internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.85.

Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) noted that the statements that were chosen from FLES and the FLCAS scales to make the shortened versions, were selected to reflect the principles of the original scales while ensuring the reliability of the measurement. The same shortened version of the FLES used in this study has been used in numerous studies and it has been shown to be a reliable instrument (e.g., Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020 ; Dewaele & Macintyre, 2019; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). The same shortened version of the FLCAS that was used in this study has also been shown to be a reliable instrument through its use in many other studies (e.g., Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Dewaele & Macintyre, 2014, 2019; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Su, 2022).

In addition to the data collected from the surveys, this study aimed to collect data that represented the overall academic achievement of the participants in the English Communication course. The instructors of the course at the university used a standardized syllabus that specified the grading criteria. The students were all graded based on attendance (10%), homework (10%), participation (10%), an expressions quiz (5%), a TOEIC test (5%), two projects (20%), and two speaking exams (40%). As the English Communication course is graded based on many criteria, the best measure of achievement was the final grade that the participants received for the course. At the time the final grades for the English Communication course were given, the instructors gave their grades using absolute grading, which means that the students got the grade based on their overall scores and not their ranking.

3. Procedure

The three-part survey was created on Google Forms and

a link to the survey was sent to 13 instructors who were teaching an English Communication course at a Korean university. The instructors were asked to post the link on the language management system for each of their classes and to explain the study during their classes. The survey was available online only for two weeks. Then, no more submissions were accepted, and the data were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet. The final grades that the participants received for the course were provided by the departmental office in the form of an Excel document, and those grades were added to the Excel spreadsheet with the survey data.

4. Data Analysis

The data were coded in the following way: “strongly disagree” = 1, “disagree” = 2, “neither agree nor disagree” = 3, “agree” = 4, and “strongly agree” = 5. Among all the items on the survey, statements 4 and 5 on the FLCAS were reverse coded, as they indicated low levels of anxiety. The final grades that each participant received for the English Communication course were collected and then transformed from a letter grade into a number grade for data analysis. The letter grades were transformed to number grades as follows: “A+” = 9, “A” = 8, “B+” = 7, “B” = 6, “C+” = 5, “C” = 4, “D+” = 3, “D” = 2, and “F” = 1. The responses to the survey were reviewed and any submissions from participants who indicated that they did not wish their data to be used in the study were removed. The remaining data were submitted to correlation analyses using *cor.test* function, and multiple regression analyses using *lm* function in R (R Core Team, 2022).

IV. RESULTS

1. The Correlation Between FLA, FLE, and Final Grades

The correlations between FLE and final grades, and FLA and final grades were both significant with $p < .001$, as can be seen in Table 1. The scatter plots for the Spearman correlations can be seen in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

Correlation analyses show that final grades are significantly and positively correlated with FLE (Spearman’s rho, 0.27; $p < .001$, Figure 1), and significantly and negatively linked to FLA (Spearman’s rho, -0.30; $p < .001$, Figure 2). As expected, FLE and FLA show a negative correlation that also proves to be significant (Spearman’s rho, -0.36; $p < .001$, Figure 3).

TABLE 1
The Results of Correlation Analyses

Variable		FLE	FLA
Grade	Spearman’s Rho	0.27***	-0.30***
FLA	Spearman’s Rho	-0.36***	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

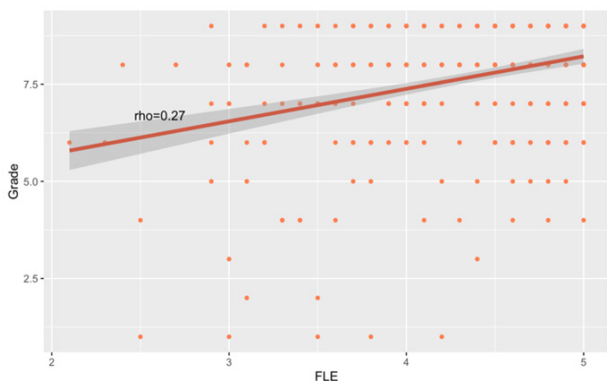


FIGURE 1 Relationship Between FLE and Final Grades

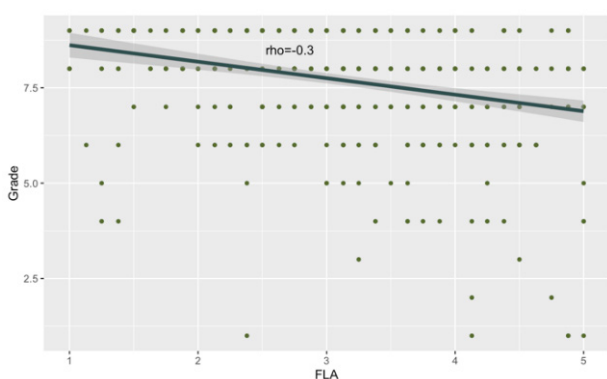


FIGURE 2 Relationship Between FLA and Final Grades

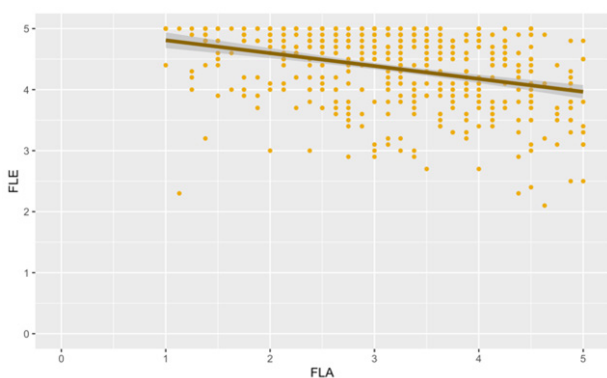


FIGURE 3 Relationship Between FLA and FLE

2. Multiple regression analysis

A stepwise hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to test the effects of the students' FLE and FLA on their final grades. Since the distribution of FLE and FLA as well as final grades turned out to be not normally distributed, all the values were log-transformed. Also, as seen in Table 1, because FLE is significantly and negatively correlated to FLA, both variables could not be included in the same model. To eliminate the collinearity between two predictors, residualization of one of the two predictors was performed as follows: first, a linear regression was

performed with FLA as the response and FLE as the predictor. The residual errors representing the variance in FLA that is not accounted for by FLE from this regression were taken. Then a multiple linear regression was performed with log-transformed final grade as the dependent variable and log-transformed FLE and the residualized log-transformed FLA values. Also included was the students' gender, which was coded as either Male or Female.

TABLE 2

The Best Fitting Model from Multiple Regression Analyses With Final Grade as the Dependent Variable

Predictors	β	SE	p -value
(Intercept)	0.7591	0.1639	< .001***
log(FLE)	0.8196	0.1120	< .001***
FLA(residuals)	-0.1499	0.0386	< .001***
Gender_Female	0.7276	0.2442	< .01**
log(FLE): Gender_Female	-0.4267	0.1662	< .05*

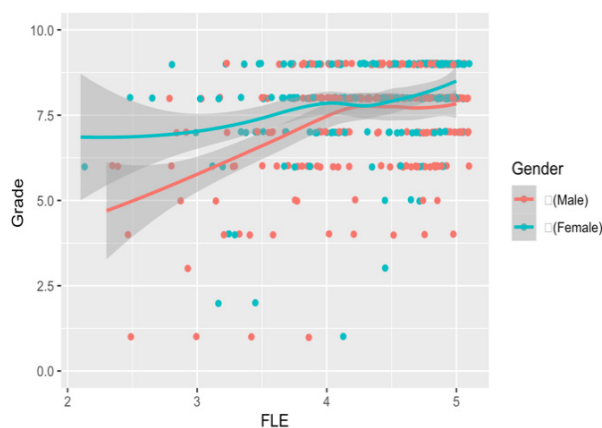


FIGURE 4 The Interaction Between Students' Grades, Gender, and FLE

The results of the best-fitting model (see Table 2) confirm that both FLA and FLE of students have significant effects on their final grades. That is, the higher the levels of FLE the higher the final grade is ($\beta = .8196, p < .001$); the higher the level of FLA the lower the final grade is ($\beta = .7276, p < .001$). Students' gender also proved significant ($\beta = -0.7276, p < .001$): female students' final grades were significantly higher than their male counterparts (the average final grades: 7.96 (female); 7.39 (male)). Interestingly, the interaction between FLE and students' gender proved significant as well ($p < .05$). As shown in Figure 4, the difference between male and female students is minimal when the level of FLE is larger ($FLE > 4$), whereas the gap grows larger when the level of FLE is lower ($FLE < 4$).

V. DISCUSSION

The results of the correlation analyses showed that there is a significant moderate correlation between FLA and FLE, which is in line with findings from other studies (Dewaele & Macintyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele et al., 2017; Li et al., 2019). It is not surprising that the correlation between FLA and FLE was -0.36 and not higher, as although it is often the case that as FLE increases, FLA decreases and vice versa, it is not always the case. Dewaele and Macintyre (2014) argued that FLA and FLE are related but that they are independent emotions where the absence of one emotion does not imply that there is a high level of the other emotion. It is conceivable a student with a very high level of FLE feels very anxious when they speak in a foreign language.

The first research question was also concerned with finding out if there was a relationship between FLA and foreign language achievement among students who take an English Communication course at a Korean university. It was revealed that there was a small to medium significant negative relationship between FLCA and the students' final grades (Spearman's rho, -0.30, $p < .001$). This data shows that students with higher levels of FLCA were more likely to get a lower final grade than students who had lower levels of FLCA. These findings are consistent with other studies that have found that there is a relationship between higher levels of FLCA and lower levels of foreign language achievement (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dikmen, 2021; Li et al., 2019; Ozer & Ispinar Akçayoglu, 2021; Teimouri et al., 2019).

The relationship between FLE and foreign language achievement among students who were taking an English Communication course at a Korean university was also investigated. There was a small to medium significant negative relationship between FLE and the students' final grades (Spearman's rho, 0.27; $p < .001$). This shows that students with higher levels of FLE were more likely to get a higher final grade than those who had lower levels of FLE. The positive correlation between FLE and FLA is in line with other studies (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Li et al., 2019; Liu & Wang, 2021; Özer & Altay, 2021).

The results of the multiple regression analysis confirmed that FLA and FLE significantly affected the students' final grades. The findings revealed that FLE exerted a stronger influence on foreign language achievement than FLA. The results differ from studies in a Chinese context that found that FLA had a greater effect on foreign language achievement than FLE (Li et al., 2019; Yang, 2021). The results also differ from a study that was conducted on students from around the world that discovered that FLE was not a significant predictor of foreign language achievement. The findings in this study add weight to the idea that the relative effects of negative and positive emotions might well differ depending on the cultural contexts of the study (Liu & Wang, 2021). The findings show that in a Korean context, the positive effects of FLE outweigh the negative effects of FLA.

It was discovered that gender plays a role in the relationship between FLA, FLE, and foreign language achievement. The results showed that the effect of FLE on foreign language achievement was stronger for male students than it was for female students. This suggests that when male students have low levels of FLE they have much lower levels of foreign language achievement. Gender did not have a significant influence on the relationship between FLA and language achievement.

The findings of this study have pedagogical implications for instructors of English as a foreign language in Korea. When English as foreign language instructors in Korea are aware that male students' foreign language achievement is strongly affected by FLE, then they can be more aware of how their teaching methods affect the FLE of the students in their class and they can employ teaching methods that raise the FLE levels of all their students.

There have been many suggestions made in the literature for how instructors of English as a foreign language can lower their students' levels of FLA and raise their students' levels of FLE. It has been suggested that instructors can combat the negative effects of FLA by increasing their students' levels of FLE (Li & Wei, 2022). A key suggestion for lowering FLA and increasing FLE is for the instructor to create a positive classroom environment. Creating a good classroom environment can help to increase foreign language learners' FLE (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Liu & Wang, 2021; J.H. Ma & Y.A. Cho, 2020). A teacher can help to create a good classroom atmosphere by being positive (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Liu & Wang, 2021; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019), encouraging (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019), supportive (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019), humorous (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019), and by doing classroom activities that the students find enjoyable (Dewaele et al., 2018; J.H. Ma & Y.A. Cho, 2020). Additionally, foreign language teachers can promote foreign language enjoyment in their classrooms by creating a classroom atmosphere where students interact with one another, laugh together, assist each other, and have close relationships (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). It is recommended that instructors of English as a foreign language in Korea strive to increase the FLE of their students to improve their students' language achievement.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between foreign language anxiety, foreign language enjoyment, and foreign language achievement among students taking a compulsory English Communication course at a university in Korea and the role that gender plays in those relationships. This study discovered that there was a significant negative relationship between FLA and FLE, which means that there was a link between higher levels of FLA and lower levels of FLE. A Spearman correlation showed that there was a significant negative relationship between FLA and foreign language achievement among the 456 participants.

A Spearman correlation also revealed a significant positive relationship between FLE and foreign language achievement among the participants.

A stepwise hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that both FLA and FLE significantly affected the language achievement of the participants. In addition, the analysis found that FLE had a stronger influence on language achievement than FLA and that male students were more strongly influenced by FLE than their female classmates. It was discovered that when male students have low levels of FLE, they have much lower levels of foreign language achievement.

The findings from this study show that the EFL achievement of students at a Korean university is affected by both FLA and FLE, with FLE having a stronger influence. It is suggested that to increase achievement among Korean EFL university students, EFL instructors in Korea should try to reduce their students' FLA and increase their students' FLE. It is recommended that instructors of English as a foreign language in Korea should try to reduce their students' FLA and increase their FLE by creating a positive classroom environment where students feel comfortable and interact positively with each other, by being funny, positive, supportive, and doing activities that students are interested in.

This study does have some limitations. Firstly, all of the students in this study were from one Korean university, which could mean that the participants were not representative of all EFL students in Korea. The results of this study may not be generalized to all EFL students in Korea. A future study that includes students from different universities in Korea would be beneficial. A second limitation is that the participants in this study were self-selected. The survey was made available to more than 3,000 EFL students at a Korean university, but only 456 students filled out the survey. It is likely that the students who chose to participate in this study are those that had strong feelings about their English course and as a result, the findings might not apply to the entire population. A further limitation is that it is possible that other factors that were not investigated in this study were playing a role in the levels of foreign language achievement. Future research could include more variables such as language proficiency and the number of languages spoken.

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