

**Title:** Enjoyment, anxiety, and out-of-class foreign language use among Spanish foreign language learners.

**Abstract:** This study investigated the relationship between Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), Out-of-Class Foreign Language Use (OCFLU) and learner factors (FL and FL proficiency level). Participants were 611 foreign language (FL) learners aged 16 to 72 at Spanish Official Language Schools. An online questionnaire was used to collect the study data. Results revealed that the informants scored high in FLE, moderately in FLCA and quite low in OCFLU; FLE was positively related to OCFLU, while FLCA was negatively associated with it; these two associations held in FL proficiency levels below higher-intermediate (B2) for all foreign languages considered. This study confirms previous research, adds new evidence concerning the relationship between FLE and FLCA and OCFLU, and considers the implications for FL teaching and learning in formal situations, with particular attention to autonomous learning in an increasingly digitalized world.

**Keywords:** foreign language enjoyment; foreign language classroom anxiety; out-of-class foreign language use; extramural language use

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## 1. Introduction

Research on emotions in second language (L2) acquisition has a long and productive history (see Plonsky et al., 2022, for a timeline of emotion research trajectories since 2010). Negative emotions, most notably, language anxiety have been the focus of numerous studies (Teimouri et al., 2019; Zhang, 2019). However, the advent of *Positive Psychology* – defined as “the scientific study of what makes life most worth living” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) – has brought research on the role of “positive-broadening emotions” in language learning to the fore (Gabryś-Barker, 2016; MacIntyre et al., 2019) and this line of research has been progressively consolidated, extended, and given full recognition in applied linguistics (Dewaele, Chen, Padilla, & Lake, 2019).

Two emotional constructs, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), the relationship between them, and the link between each of these constructs with learner, contextual factors, and proficiency have attracted considerable research attention in the last eight years (see Botes et al., 2022, for a meta-analysis of the effects of FLE). However, this strand of research has not investigated an ample enough variety of students and contexts yet. A review of the literature on these emotional constructs reveals that, with some exceptions (e.g., Author 1, 2021; Author 2 & Author 1, 2021, 2022; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016, 2019; Dewaele, 2019; Dewaele, Franco Magdalena, & Saito, 2019; Dewaele, Botes, & Greiff, 2022, Dewaele, Saito, & Halimi, 2022; Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2020), studies typically recruit adolescents and young adults while older age groups are underrepresented in the study samples. Furthermore, participants from contexts other than secondary schools and universities are not common.

Although the way these two emotions relate to FL use outside the class remains

largely underexplored, it is reasonable to hypothesize a relationship between both. It has been contended that, in a world where extramural experiences of FLE or the L2 are on the increase through social media, gaming, and streaming services among others, emotion research will need to expand to cover emotions felt in connection with language use outside the classroom (Ross & Rivers, 2018). Additionally, studies on extramural FL use, pioneered by Sundqvist (2009), are also characterized by the same limitations as those identified in the literature on FLE and FLCA: participants are generally teenage or young adult students from secondary schools or universities, and English is the FL that studies almost exclusively focus on (Choi, 2018; Dewaele & Ip, 2013; Inada & Inada, 2019; Lai et al, 2015; Lee, 2019; Lee & Lee, 2021; Olsson & Sylvén, 2015; Elai Shirvan & Taherian, 2021).

In light of these observations, this study aims to contribute to filling these research gaps by investigating levels of FLE, FLCA and OCFLU in a wide-ranging sample of Spanish learners of FL as regards to age and educational backgrounds, and the relationship between the two emotional constructs and OCFLU. The participants span all post-infant age groups from teenagers to mature adults and are students of English, French, German, Italian and Spanish as a FL in Spanish Official Language Schools.

## 2. Literature review

The following section will present a brief overview of research concerning the factors being examined. The nature of this study, where two major emotions are investigated together with the use of the FL outside class, makes it impossible to present a full, in-depth review of each of them. Thus, just the most relevant aspects for the specific study at hand are dealt with along with supplementary references to comprehensive reviews in each case.

### 2.1. Foreign Language Enjoyment

Research on affective factors in FL and L2 acquisition used to focus on negative emotions, especially on anxiety (Dewaele, Botes, & Greiff, 2022). Nonetheless, since the emergence of Positive Psychology (PosPsy) and its translation to this field, pioneered by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), an increasing number of studies are examining the role of positive emotions in FL learning (FLL). The area of psychology known as PosPsy focuses on “the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 104) and it emphasizes elements of human life that promote fulfillment, happiness, and flourishing (Linley et al., 2006). According to MacIntyre et al. (2019), factors addressed by research in the area of PosPsy, such as happiness, optimism and resilience, play a fundamental role in language learning, which calls for “perseverance, optimism and resilience, among other qualities” (p. 1) (for a full review of PosPsy in FL/L2 learning and research, see Dewaele, Chen, Padilla, & Lake [2019]; MacIntyre et al. [2019]; Wang et al., [2021]).

One of the constructs within PosPsy in this field that has received most research attention is that of FLE. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), who coined this term, characterized this emotion as “a complex emotion, capturing interacting components of challenge and perceived ability that reflect the human drive for success in the face of a difficult task” (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, p. 216). According to these researchers, FLE provides learners with a safe psychological base from which exploring unfamiliar linguistic and cultural worlds is possible. When it comes to emotions, it is also important

to note that a prior state, such as anticipation, expectations or previous experiences, might influence “a subsequent one, and not always in a way that is anticipated or intended” (Gregersen, 2020, p. 73). In this sense, Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) indicated that fluctuations in FLCA and FLE may be triggered by previous experiences with the FL. Although FLE has mainly been explored in relation to a number of factors, such as FL achievement personality traits, learner and external variables (mainly teachers, peers and classroom environment) (e.g., Botes et al. 2022; Boudreau et al., 2018; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele, Botes, & Greiff, 2022; Dewaele, Saito, & Halimi, 2022; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Jin & Zhang, 2018; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Li, 2020), research on the link between FLE and FL use outside the classroom is still scarce in FL learning contexts with a wide age range of adult learners.

## 2.2. *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety*

Foreign Language Anxiety has been characterized as a form of anxiety in a specific context (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000) that has been described as the negative emotions that arise while using or learning a FL (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) Scale that has been extensively used to identify FLA in FLL on the assumption that FLL in classroom situations is often perceived as particularly stressful (see Botes et al., 2020 for a meta-analysis of the relationship between FLCA measured through the FLCAS and academic achievement).

The relationship between FLE and FLCA has attracted considerable research attention (Li, 2020) since the study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). Two main conclusions can be drawn from this research strand. Firstly, that FLCA and FLE are significantly and negatively correlated, irrespectively of the study context (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Boudreau et al., 2018; Dewaele & Alfawzan 2018; Saito et al., 2018). Secondly, that FLE and FLCA are two independent emotions, and not “opposite ends of the same dimension” (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 261). This means that the presence of anxiety does not automatically imply the absence of FLE and vice versa (Boudreau et al., 2018). Therefore, when the instructional situation is engaging and challenging, the learner may experience anxiety and enjoyment simultaneously. Additionally, the theory on the dimensional independence of FLE and FLCA in FLL was confirmed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019), who found that FLE and FLCA scores were predicted by different independent variables: while FLCA was mostly predicted by students’ emotional stability, FLE was mostly predicted by teacher-related variables. The analysis of the qualitative study data showed that the most frequently mentioned cause of FLE was the teacher, while, in contrast, the “self” category was the most often used to describe FLCA. These results led the authors to conclude that FLE is more context dependent than FLCA.

## 2.3. *Out-of-class Foreign Language Use*

The term *Out-of-class Foreign Language Use* (OCFLU) is used here to refer to “any type of voluntary, non-course related FL use outside the classroom. [...] OCFLU may be unguided, user-guided, or even teacher-guided provided it is not meant as a FL class assignment” (Author2 & Author 1, 2021, p. 7). This term, therefore, expands Sundqvist’s (2009) notion of extramural English, defined as “the English that learners come into contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom” (p. 1) to any

FL and limits it to the FL used by one's will or own free choice. The stress therefore is on learners' personal, voluntary, coursework-unrelated use of the FL away from their classroom context, largely or completely disconnected from their classmates or teacher's intervention.

Research focused on the interaction between language use outside the class and emotions is central to our investigation. The qualitative study conducted by Ross and Rivers (2018) with interview data from eight university-level students on a pre-degree language program at an Australian institution revealed that the FL learners' emotion of enjoyment is felt outside of their formal language learning context more intensely than within the classroom and stems from meeting needs encountered in everyday social situations. Swandewi (2020) studied the effect of out-of-class activities on primary school learners' enthusiasm via a mixed-method approach. Students stated that their enthusiasm, determined by their autodidacticism and problem-solving tasks, helped them to focus on acquiring vocabulary. Within the autodidactic answers, students pointed out that the use of out-of-class sources, such as the Internet, social media, video games, music, and reading, were useful in their FLL process. Problem-solving tasks, on the other hand, made them reread textbooks and look words up in the dictionary, thus improving their lexical competence and FLL self-awareness. Lee and Lee (2021) found that Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) that included talking to English speakers via social media or watching YouTube videos in English was a significant predictor of FLE in middle school, high school and university EFL students in Korea. Lai et al. (2015) found that the variety of out-of-class learning activities was significantly associated with enjoyment in learning English. Lee's (2019) results indicated that the quantity of IDLE was a predictor for enjoyment. Students who participated frequently in IDLE activities enjoyed the FL more than those who engaged in them less frequently. The study by Dewaele et al. (2018) also supports this relationship in their investigation, as high school students who practiced the FL more regularly tended to experience higher FLE. The association between enjoyment and extramural FL use has been established for younger learners, too. A recent study by Lee and Taylor (2022) in 160 EFL primary school children in Hong Kong showed a significant positive correlation between classroom enjoyment and extramural English.

As for the relationship between FLCA and the use of the FL outside the class, Inada (2017), Choi (2018), and Inada and Inada (2019) are, as far as we know, the only authors who have explored it directly so far. Inada (2017) found that highly anxious students "studied less at home, spoke less English out of class, and took fewer risks in class" (p. 70). Choi (2018) examined the association between out-of-class English learning and affective filters and discovered that there were no significant effects of out-of-class learning on FLCA. The statistical insignificance may be attributed to the limited amount of time students spend on out-of-class learning. Finally, after having 257 university students fill their 45-item Likert scale questionnaire, Inada and Inada (2019) found that the use of English outside class was significantly related to a lower FLCA.

In summary, despite having gained some attention in the last five years, FL learners' emotional experiences outside the classroom are still largely underexplored. To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first one that set out to investigate the relationship between OCFLU, FLE and FLCA. Additionally, unlike the extant research on extramural language use, more than one FL (not just English) is included, and it involves participants from a wide variety of age ranges and educational backgrounds.

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1. Objective and Research Questions*

This study aimed to explore FLE, FLCA and OCFLU among Spanish FL students, the associations between them, and how learner variables are related to FLE, FLCA and OCFLU. More specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

RQ1: What are the levels of FLE, FLCA and OCFLU among Spanish students of a FL?

RQ2: Are FLE and FLCA associated with OCFLU?

RQ3: Do associations between FLE and FLCA with OCFLU vary as a function of the FL and the FL proficiency level?

### 3.2. Participants and Context

A total of 611 conveniently sampled FL students from 17 Spanish Official Language Schools (OLSs) participated in the study. OLSs are state funded, regionally managed institutions specialized in teaching and certifying FLs in Spain, whose curricula are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). Potential participants were encouraged to fill the questionnaire used to gather the data in class, by email and through social media. Their ages ranged between 16 and 72 years ( $M = 41.91$  years;  $SD = 12.85$ ;  $Mn = 44$ ;  $Mo = 52$ ). A total of 5.1% of the sample were adolescents (16-19 years old), 34.4% were young adults (20-39 years old), 29.1% were middle-aged adults (40-49 years old), 25% were mature adults (50-59 years old) and 6.4% were seniors (+60 years old). Female participation (72.34%) was higher than male participation (27.66%), roughly reflecting the female/male distribution in non-compulsory FL courses in OLSs (66/34) (MECD, 2016, p. 4). The participants were FL learners of six languages (Table 1) and different FL proficiency levels according to CEFR (Table 2).

**Table 1**

*Foreign Language in Relation to Which the Participants Completed the Questionnaire*

Language	Frequency	Percentage
English	441	72.18
French	84	13.75
Other	86	14.08
Total	611	100

Note: The category 'Other' included German, Russian, Italian, and Spanish.

**Table 2**

*FL Proficiency Level*

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Up to A2	298	48.77
B1	217	35.52
B2	96	15.71
Total	611	100

Although participants reported a variety of educational backgrounds (Table 3), nearly half the sample (46.15%) stated having earned a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. Overall, the sample has a considerably higher level of education than the general Spanish population. A total of 73.00% of the sample reported having obtained tertiary education versus 38.60% in the Spanish population at large (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2020).

**Table 3**  
*Participants' highest level of education*

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary Education	14	2.29
Secondary Education	20	3.27
Vocational Training	28	4.58
Higher Secondary Education	103	16.86
Higher Vocational Training	69	11.29
Undergraduate Degree	95	15.55
Bachelor's Degree	198	32.41
Master's Degree	71	11.62
Doctoral Degree	13	2.13
Total	611	100

### 3.3. Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire consisting of four sections: the sociodemographic section, the FLE, FLCA and OCFLU scales. The scales were culturally adapted translations of the original measures into Spanish. The cross-cultural adaptation model laid out by Chapman and Carter (1979) involved several stages: forward translation, forward translation reconciliation, harmonization, pilot testing, pilot testing review and proofreading. This model was used to minimize the influence of linguistic, cultural, and psychological differences on the intended populations.

#### 3.3.1. Sociodemographic Section

This section collected data regarding participants' gender, age, highest level of education, FL, FL proficiency level, and OLS in which they were enrolled.

#### 3.3.2. The FLE Scale

Ten items extracted in the study by Dewaele, Franco Magdalena and Saito (2019) from the original 21-item FLE Scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) were used (Appendix A). The items were selected "to capture the reliability of the original scale without sacrificing the reliability of the measurement" (Dewaele, Franco Magdalena & Saito, 2019, p. 418) and included private and social sources of FLE (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Internal consistency of the 10 items of the FLE scale, as measured by Cronbach alpha coefficient, was high (.85) (internal consistency of the 21 items in Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) study was .86).

#### 3.3.3. The FLCA Scale

The eight items extracted from the FLCA scale developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) used in a study by MacIntyre (1992) were used in the present investigation (Appendix B). They reflect symptoms of anxiety and nervousness in the FL class. This shortened scale was found to maintain the reliability of the original scale (MacIntyre, 1992) and then validated by Botes et al. (2021). Two FLCA items indicated low anxiety (reverse scored) and six, high anxiety. Internal reliability for the 8-item FLCA scale, as measured by Cronbach alpha coefficient, was high ( $\alpha = .89$ ) (internal consistency of

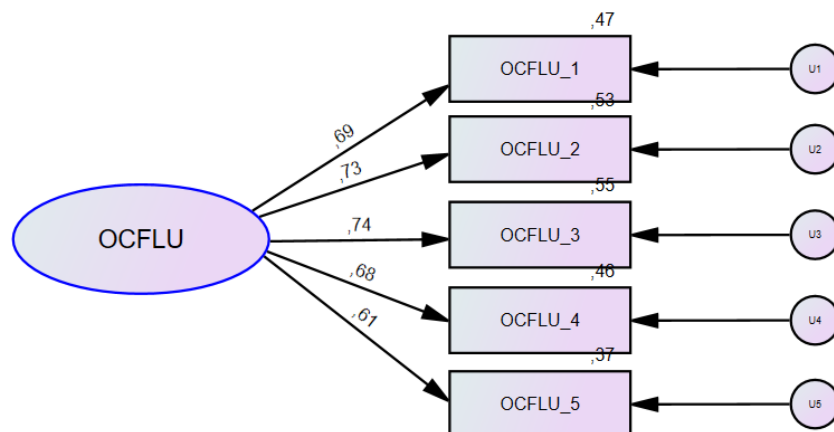
the same items in Dewaele and MacIntyre's [2014] study was .86).

### 3.3.4. The OCFLU Scale

Five items regarding language use outside the class were adapted from Olsson and Sylvén (2015) for this questionnaire (Appendix C). Whereas Olsson and Sylvén's (2015) questionnaire aimed to investigate the frequency of language use outside the class measured in minutes per day, our adaptation used broader terms of frequency, and participants estimated the frequency of language use for five activity types outside the class on a 7-point Likert scale (from 0 = *never* to 6 = *every day*). Additionally, the item concerning the use of computer games was replaced by an item asking the participants about their FL practice.

A hybrid factor analysis (cross-validation) approach was used to investigate the factor structure of the OCFLU scale (Matsunaga, 2010) wherein the dataset was randomly halved to conduct an EFA ( $n = 305$ ) and a CFA ( $n = 306$ ). On one of the subsamples, an EFA was conducted on the five OCFLU items. Principal axis factoring was used as the factor extraction method. The items were determined appropriate for factor analysis, as the KMO statistic was observed at .761, above the commonly recommended value of .600, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2(10) = 529.404$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The communalities were all above 0.400 (OCFLU1 = .530; OCFLU2 = .710; OCFLU3 = .644; OCFLU4 = .525; OCFLU5 = .439). The EFA indicated a one-factor solution, which accounted for 56.96% of the variance. Items' factor loadings were the following: OCFLU1 = .636; OCFLU2 = .825; OCFLU3 = .749; OCFLU4 = .631; OCFLU5 = .551, exceeding the factor loadings of the criteria for inclusion of 0.40 indicated in the literature (Bandalos & Finney, 2010). A CFA was then conducted on the other subsample (Figure 1). The overall model fit indicated that the minimum was achieved ( $\chi^2(9) = 38.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The model was tested for the single-factor structure of the 5 OCFLU items and the following indices were observed: RMSEA = .07, CFI = .93, and SRMR = .0537. According to Matsunaga (2010), an acceptable model fit is indicated if RMSEA < .08, CFI > .90, and SRMR < .10. Therefore, the single-factor structure was supported by the results of the CFA and may be considered "acceptable".

**Figure 1**  
*Confirmatory Factor Analysis results*



The internal consistency reliability for the 5 OCFLU items, examined for the full sample, was high ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

### 3.4. Data analysis

The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants were summarized through descriptive statistics. Average scores were calculated for the scales of FLE, FLCA, and OCFLU. Bivariate Pearson correlations (Table 5) and linear regression analyses (via stepwise methods) were used to identify relations between FLE, FLCA, and OCFLU and potential confounders, including gender, age, education level, FL and FL proficiency level as covariates in all regression models (Tables 6, 7 and 8). In linear regression analyses, simple-initial models considering the interaction term between the predictor (gender) and independent variables (FLE and FLCA) with OCFLU (outcome) were built to explore the presence of potential effect modification. Subsequently, the relationships between FLE and FLCA (predictors) with OCFLU (outcome variable) were analyzed by univariate linear regression (enter method), in separate regression models. To test the independent associations of FLE and FLCA with OCFLU, multiple linear regression models were constructed including all behaviors simultaneously. Model 1 was adjusted for gender, age, and FL proficiency level; and model 2 was additionally adjusted for FL. All the assumptions related to the generalization of the results were reasonably met. Simple slope analyses (moderation analyses) were performed to examine if the associations between FLE and FLCA with OCFLU differed depending on FL and FL proficiency level. Overall, the assumptions related to the generalization of the results (linearity, normal distribution of residuals, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity) were reasonably met in the different regression models. All calculations were performed using the SPSS 26. Significance was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Levels of FLE, FLCA and OCFLU among Spanish students of a FL

The results for FLE, FLCA and OCFLU for the overall study sample are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Results for FLE, FLCA and OCFLU (N = 611)*

	Range scores	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
Foreign Language Enjoyment	1 ( <i>strongly disagree</i> ) – 5 ( <i>strongly agree</i> )	4.19	0.54	4.15, 4.23
Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety	1 ( <i>strongly disagree</i> ) – 5 ( <i>strongly agree</i> )	3.08	0.91	3.01, 3.15
Out-of-class Foreign Language Use	0 ( <i>Never</i> ) – 6 ( <i>Every day</i> )	2.72	1.35	2.62, 2.83

### 4.2. Associations of FLE and FLCA with OCFLU

Bivariate correlation (Table 5) and linear regression analyses were used to identify potential confounders, including gender, age, education level, language, and language level as covariates in all regression models.

**Table 5**

*Bivariate correlations of participants' sociodemographic characteristics with FLE, FLCA and OCFLU*

	FLE	FLCA	OCFLU
Gender	0.028	.119**	-.106**
Age	.150**	-.089*	-.088*
Education	-0.041	-0.062	-0.061
Language_Dummy0 <sup>a</sup>	-0.034	-.114**	-.106**
Language_Dummy1 <sup>b</sup>	.080*	-.138**	-0.005
Level_Dummy0 <sup>c</sup>	0.048	-.122**	.191**
Level_Dummy1 <sup>d</sup>	-.114**	.106**	0.037
FLE		-.301**	.203**
FLCA	-.301**		-.216**
OCFLU	.203**	-.216**	

a. Language\_dummy0: English = 0, French = 0, Others = 1.

b. Language\_dummy1: English = 0, French = 1, Others = 0.

c. Level\_dummy0: A2 = 0, B2 = 0, B1 = 1.

d. Level\_dummy1: A2 = 0, B1 = 0, B2 = 1.

The individual relationships between FLE and FLCA with OCFLU are shown in Table 6 and Table 7 respectively. FLE was directly associated with OCFLU ( $B = 0.286$ ,  $SE = .049$ ,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .11$ ,  $F(5, 611) = 16.226$ ). This means that the more FLE learners experienced, the more they used the target language outside the classroom context and vice versa. FLCA was inversely associated with OCFLU ( $B = -0.188$ ,  $SE = .037$ ,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .09$ ,  $F(5, 611) = 14.452$ ). In contrast to our FLE results, when FLCA increased, students were less likely to use the FL outside their classroom environment. All the results remained similar after being additionally adjusted for FL (Model 2, all  $p \leq .01$ ).

**Table 6**  
*Individual Associations Between FLE and OCFLU*

Predictors	Model 1				Adjusted $R^2$	Model 2
	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$	$p$ -value		$p$ -value
FLE	0.286	.049	.229	<.001	.111	<.001
Gender	-1.956	.580	-.129	.001		.001
Age	-0.065	.020	-.124	.001		.001
Level_Dummy0 <sup>a</sup>	4.120	.750	.222	<.001		<.001
Level_Dummy1 <sup>b</sup>	1.843	.573	.130	.001		.004

a. Level\_dummy0: A2 = 0, B2 = 0, B1 = 1.

b. Level\_dummy1: A2 = 0, B1 = 0, B2 = 1.

**Table 7**  
*Individual Associations Between FLCA and OCFLU*

Predictors	Model 1					Model 2
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i> -value	Adjusted $R^2$	<i>p</i> -value
FLCA	-0.188	.037	-.202	<0.001	.099	<.001
Gender	-1.464	.588	-.097	.013		.012
Age	-0.056	.020	-.106	.007		.004
Level_Dummy0 <sup>a</sup>	3.803	.759	.205	<.001		<.001
Level_Dummy1 <sup>b</sup>	1.713	.575	.121	.003		.014

a. Level\_dummy0: A2 = 0, B2 = 0, B1 = 1.

b. Level\_dummy1: A2 = 0, B1 = 0, B2 = 1.

The independent associations of FLE and FLCA with OCFLU are shown in Table 8. When FLE and FLCA were simultaneously entered into the models, the results remained similar ( $p < .001$ ). FLE (positively) and FLCA (inversely) were independently associated with OCFLU ( $B = 0.19$ ,  $SE = .051$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and  $B = -.15$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively,  $F(2, 611) = 21.986$ ).

**Table 8**

*Independent Associations of FLE and FLCA with OCFLU*

Predictors	Model 1					Model 2
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i> -value	Adjusted $R^2$	<i>p</i> -value
FLE	0.189	.051	.151	<.001	.064	<.001
FLCA	-0.15	.03	-.17	<.001		<.001

#### 4.3 Associations between FLE and FLCA with OCFLU depending on FL and FL proficiency level

Regarding the FL (Table 9), the associations of FLE and FLCA with OCFLU remained statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) in English (FLE:  $F(3, 611) = 12.842$ ; FLCA:  $F(3, 611) = 14.787$ ) and French (FLE:  $F(3, 611) = 1.578$ ; FLCA:  $F(3, 611) = 1.651$ ). Regarding FL proficiency level (Table 10), the simple slope analyses showed that the associations of FLE and FLCA with OCFLU remained statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) (if FLE increases, OCFLU increases, and if FLCA increases, OCFLU decreases and vice versa) for up to A2 (FLE:  $F(3, 611) = 5.763$ ; FLCA:  $F(3, 611) = 5.613$ ) and B1 students (FLE:  $F(3, 611) = 11.110$ ; FLCA:  $F(3, 611) = 8.751$ ), but not for B2 students ( $p > .05$ ) (FLE:  $F(3, 611) = 2.934$ ; FLCA:  $F(3, 611) = 2.703$ ).

**Table 9**

*Results of Simple Slope Analysis for the Moderating Effect of Language*

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i> -value	Adjusted $R^2$
<b>ENGLISH</b>					
FLE	.275	.057	.227	<.001	.075
FLCA	-.228	.042	-.250	<.001	.086
<b>FRENCH</b>					
FLE	.307	.152	.228	< .05	.020
FLCA	-.220	.106	-.226	< .05	.023

Outcome: OCFLU. Model adjusted for gender and age.

**Table 10***Results of Simple Slope Analysis for the Moderating Effect of Proficiency Level*

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i> -value	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
<b>Up to A2</b>					
FLE	.267	.068	.225	<.001	.046
FLCA	-.204	.053	-.221	<.001	.045
<b>B1</b>					
FLE	.350	.080	.285	<.001	.123
FLCA	-.211	.060	-.235	<.001	.097
<b>B2</b>					
FLE	.121	.137	.088	> .05	.058
FLCA	-.036	.093	-.039	> .05	.051

Outcome: OCFLU. Model adjusted for gender and age.

## 5. Discussion

Our study reveals that study participants experience a considerably high level of enjoyment in language learning ( $M = 4.20$ ; Range 1–5). Most previous studies (with younger age groups) obtained lower results for FLE. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) found that the average FLE score for their students ( $M = 24$ ) was 3.82. In Lee's (2019) study, FLE mean was 3.41 (range 1–5) for students aged 19–26 ( $M = 21.55$ ). Lee and Lee's (2021) study on 114 university students, whose mean age was 20.84, recorded an average of 3.24 (range 1–5). Dewaele et al. (2018) found that high schoolers' FLE mean score was 3.9. Finally, Lai et al (2015), using a FLE scale ranging from 1 to 6, obtained a mean score of 4.42 for 82 learners whose average age was 14 (their mean score was 3.77 in a range of 1 to 5). Therefore, learners in our study seemed to experience higher levels of FLE than those reported by previous research with participants at a lower mean age. It must be borne in mind that the nature of OLSs is different to the institutions in which those studies with younger students were conducted. To illustrate, a survey carried out in three Andalusian OLSs (Author1, 2021) found that over half the sample mentioned reasons connected with pleasure, leisure, personal interest, culture and travelling when asked about their motivations to study a FL.

With reference to FLCA, the sample reports a moderate level of classroom anxiety ( $M = 3.1$ ). This result is rather similar to that obtained by Lee's (2019) ( $M = 3.18$ ; range 1–5) for students aged 19–26 (average age = 21.55). However, Dewaele et al. (2018) found that high schoolers' FLCA mean score was 2.4 whereas Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) participants (average age = 24) scored 2.7. A reason for the levels of FLCA might be found in our sample gender distribution. The high number of female participants might justify a moderate level of FLCA given, according to some studies, females tend to experience stronger emotions and anxiety (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2019).

Particularly striking is the amount of OCFLU reported by participants as it indicates learners' surprisingly low contact with the FL outside the formal language classroom. In a situation of FL (as opposed to L2) learning, as it is typical of the FL under study in the Spanish context, the poor exposure to input in the FL is bound to negatively affect the students' language development. As Lightbown (2014) and Collins and Muñoz (2016) contend, the amount of instructional time in the 'drip-feed' programs that are typical of FL teaching in schools around the world is clearly insufficient for reaching reasonable proficiency levels.

Additionally, our results show a significant association between the affective factors under study and OCFLU, the association between FLCA and OCFLU being weaker than that between FLE and OCFLU. These results suggest that FLE might be a stronger predictive factor than FLCA for OCFLU. Future research addressing directionality and causality is necessary to verify this speculation.

Our findings thus provided evidence that affective factors predict OCFLU in contexts of limited exposure to and engagement with the FL. As shown in Appendices A and B, the questionnaire items intended to measure emotions experienced in connection with classroom situations. Furthermore, results indicated that the association between FLE and OCFLU is stronger than that between FLCA and OCFLU. Our study confirmed similar associations observed in previous studies. Inada and Inada (2019) also found a significant negative correlation between speaking opportunity (outside the classroom) an FLCA and Lee and Lee (2021) reported that Informal Digital Learning of English was a significant predictor of FLE. Similarly, students who used the language less frequently outside class and studied less at home experienced higher FLCA (Inada, 2017).

It ought to be noted that while the adjusted  $R^2$  may be considered low by most standards, some other variables such as motivation, willingness to communicate, availability of time and resources, among other factors, may affect or be affected by FL learners' OCFLU (e.g., Author2 & Author1, 2021). We understand that additional predictors would most probably produce better predicted values and, hence, increase the variance explained by the model.

Finally, the upper intermediate level of proficiency seems to be a threshold for FLE and FLCA to be predictive factors of OCFLU. This means that in advanced FL students, emotions experienced in the classroom context do not impact on the amount of FL used in out-of-classroom situations. There is a reasonable likelihood that advanced students are proficient enough in the FL to use it frequently in informal settings and hence emotional factors within the classroom might not have any bearing on their use of the FL in extramural contexts, although further research is needed to confirm this.

## 6. Practical implications

There are some consequences for FL teaching and learning from the study. An obvious implication of the relatively low OCFLU among the study participants is that one of the tasks ahead of FL teaching is to integrate and take advantage of the variety of available – mainly online-based– learning opportunities that can expand the boundaries of the classroom and support learning with increased opportunities for out-of-class exposure and engagement with the FL (Collins & Muñoz, 2016). As Lightbown (2014) rightly puts it, “Learning a new language requires thousands of hours of exposure to and use of the language, and reaching the highest levels of proficiency requires experiences in language use that cannot be offered or even fully replicated in the classroom” (p. 18). Learners should, therefore, be made aware of this limitation of formal FL learning and instructed on how to maximize out-of-class language practice opportunities. This, in turn, would require paying due attention to the systematic instruction in autonomous, self-directed and self-regulated language learning strategies so that students can maximize the potential benefits of this expanded learning environment. Additionally, since OCFLU was found to be predicted by affective factors, it may be the case that positive experiences of formal FL learning might motivate students to use the FL outside the classroom walls. Therefore, teachers should create a positive atmosphere in their classes (Lee & Lee, 2021) to lower

FLCA (Dewaele & Ip, 2013; Marcos-Llinas & Garau, 2009) and increase FLE, by focusing on enjoyable experiences (Dewaele et al., 2018) and taking learners' interests into consideration.

## 7. Conclusion

This study set out to research levels of FLE, FLCA and OCFLU in learners of a FL in Spain and the relationship between these two emotional constructs and OCFLU. Of primary importance in this study was to explore what role OCFLU played in these associations, bearing in mind its potential to develop informal, highly contextualized, naturalistic, productive, and autonomous FLL in ever-increasingly digitalized environments.

Three research questions were formulated to identify what the levels of FLE, FLCA, and OCFLU in our informants were, whether (and how) FLE and FLCA were associated with OCFLU, and whether those possible associations varied as a function of the FL that the informants were learning and their FL proficiency level. As regards our first research question, our informant group showed a very high level of FLE, a moderate level of FLCA, and a low level of OCFLU. The relation between FLE and OCFLU was significant and positive; a significant, albeit weaker, negative association was found between FLCA and OCFLU. Thus, these results led us to surmise that affective factors might predict the amount of OCFLU in contexts of limited exposure to and engagement with the FL. Additionally, these associations were suggestive of a more predictive role for enjoyment in OCFLU than anxiety. However, future research is warranted to establish the directionality and potential causality of these associations. Our third research question looked into how the FL participants learn and their proficiency level in that FL is related to the associations between FLE, FLCA, and OCFLU. In both cases, those associations remained significant for all FLs and levels, except for students who had already reached the B2 level.

While this research has provided new insights into the experience of FLE, FLCA and OCFLU among (mainly adult) Spanish FL learners, some limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the study took place in a particular geographical, cultural, educational, and institutional context and results are not generalizable to the overall FL learner population. Secondly, participation was voluntary, both on the part of the students and the teachers who invited them to complete the questionnaire, and this could lead to a certain degree of self-selection bias. Thirdly, only quantitative data through a questionnaire was collected in this study. Lastly, since this study was cross-sectional, it cannot be determined whether OCFLU causes, is a consequence of enjoyment/anxiety or vice versa, or a bidirectional relationship exists between OCFLU and the two emotions. In fact, given the observational nature of the study, other potential confounders might have partially influenced the results. Further studies are therefore needed to elucidate these relationships, to expand the research to a wider population of adult FL learners, and to incorporate a variety of data collection methods, including qualitative, in order to facilitate data triangulation and provide further explanation on the results.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned limitations, this study contributes to the research on the experiences of enjoyment, anxiety, and FL use outside the class, and it also helps to expand our view on affective factors and FL use in a sample with a wide age range of FL learners from a variety of educational backgrounds.

**Notes**

The numbers of official classroom hours in Spanish OLSs are the following: Course leading to CEFR Level A1 (120 hours in 1 academic year), A2 (120 hours in 1 academic year), B1 (120 hours in 1 academic year), B2 (240 hours in 2 academic years), C1 (240 hours in 2 academic years).

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. *Escala de Disfrute en el Aprendizaje de una Lengua Extranjera*

(Shortened Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (Dewaele, Franco Magdalena, & Saito [2019], translated by Author 1 & Author 2 [2022]).

¿En qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones? Responda conforme a la siguiente escala: Muy en desacuerdo / En desacuerdo / Indeciso/a / De acuerdo / Muy de acuerdo.

1. No me aburro en la clase de lengua extranjera.
2. Disfruto la clase de lengua extranjera.
3. Soy un miembro valorado de la clase de lengua extranjera.
4. En la clase de lengua extranjera, me siento orgulloso/a de mis logros.
5. En la clase de lengua extranjera hay un ambiente positivo.
6. Me resulta atractiva la idea de hablar una lengua extranjera.
7. La clase de lengua extranjera es divertida.
8. Mis compañeros y compañeras son agradables.
9. Hay buen ambiente en la clase de lengua extranjera.
10. En la clase de lengua extranjera nos reímos mucho.

#### Shortened FLE Scale (original)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Strongly disagree/ Disagree /Undecided/ Agree /Strongly agree

1. I don't get bored.
2. I enjoy it.
3. I'm a worthy member of the FL class.
4. In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.
5. It's a positive environment.
6. It's cool to know a FL.
7. It's fun.
8. The peers are nice.
9. There is a good atmosphere.
10. We laugh a lot.

### Appendix B. *Escala de Ansiedad en la Clase de Lengua Extranjera*

(Shortened Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (MacIntyre [1992]), translated by Author 1 and Author 2 [2021]).

¿En qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones? Responda conforme a la siguiente escala: Muy en desacuerdo / En desacuerdo / Indeciso/a / De acuerdo / Muy de acuerdo

1. Incluso si estoy bien preparado/a para la clase de lengua extranjera, me siento estresado/a.
2. Siempre siento que los demás estudiantes hablan la lengua extranjera mejor que yo.
3. Siento cómo me late el corazón cuando el/la docente me elige para intervenir.

4. No me preocupa cometer errores en la clase de lengua extranjera.
5. Me siento seguro/a cuando hablo en la clase de lengua extranjera.
6. Me pongo nervioso/a y me confundo fácilmente cuando estoy hablando en la clase de lengua extranjera.
7. Me pongo muy nervioso/a cuando tengo que hablar en la lengua extranjera sin preparación previa.
8. Me da vergüenza responder voluntariamente en la clase de lengua extranjera.

Shortened Foreign Classroom Language Anxiety Scale (original)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Strongly disagree/ Disagree /Undecided/ Agree /Strongly agree

1. Even if I am well prepared for FL class, I feel anxious about it.
2. I always feel that the other students speak the FL better than I do.
3. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in FL class.
4. I don't worry about making mistakes in FL class (reverse-coded).
5. I feel confident when I speak in FL class (reverse-coded).
6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my FL class.
7. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in FL class.
8. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my FL class.

Appendix C. *Frecuencia del Uso de la Lengua Extranjera Fuera de Clase*

(Out-of-Class Foreign Language Use Scale, adapted from Olsson and Sylvén [2015] by Author 2 & Author 1 [2021]).

¿Con qué frecuencia utiliza la lengua extranjera por trabajo, motivos e intereses personales fuera del aula? Responda conforme a la siguiente escala: Nunca / Menos de una vez al mes / Entre 1 y 4 veces al mes / Entre 1 y 2 veces por semana / Entre 3 y 4 veces por semana / Entre 5 y 6 veces por semana / Todos los días

1. ¿Con qué frecuencia habla en la lengua extranjera fuera de clase? (Ej.: con amigos, familiares o conocidos, por negocios, trabajo, internet, videojuegos, etc.)
2. ¿Con qué frecuencia lee en la lengua extranjera fuera de clase? (Ej.: redes sociales, libros, periódicos, revistas, etc.)
3. ¿Con qué frecuencia escribe en la lengua extranjera fuera de clase? (Ej.: cartas, correos, diarios, blogs, redes sociales, etc.)
4. ¿Con qué frecuencia escucha la lengua extranjera fuera de clase? (Ej.: música, televisión, películas, series, videojuegos, youtube, internet, etc.)
5. ¿Con qué frecuencia habla consigo mismo y/o practica solo/a la lengua extranjera produciendo oralmente? (Ej.: practicar pronunciación, cantar solo, grabarse hablando en una grabadora de voz, Vlogs / Youtube / Instagram / Snapchat, etc.)

Translation of Author 2 & Author 1's (2021) adaptation from Olsson and Sylvén (2015).

How often do you use the foreign language for work, personal reasons and interests out of class? Never / Less than once a month / between 1 and 4 times a month / between 1 and 2 times a week / between 3 and 4 times a week / between 5 and 6 times a week / every day.

1. How often do you speak the FL outside class? (e.g., with friends, relatives, colleagues, for business, work, internet, videogames, etc.)
2. How often do you read in the FL outside class? (e.g., on social media, books, newspapers, magazines, etc.);
3. How often do you write in the FL outside class? (e.g., writing letters, emails, diaries, blogs, etc.)
4. How often do you listen in the FL outside class? (e.g., music, TV, movies, series, videogames, YouTube, internet, etc.)
5. How often do you speak to yourself and/or practice speaking skills alone? (e.g., practice pronunciation, sing alone, record yourself, Vlogs/ YouTube/ Instagram/ Snapchat, etc.).