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**A Positive Psychology Perspective on SLA emotions:
Foreign Language Enjoyment in German-Language
University Learners in Northeast Italy**

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ABSTRACT

The effects and interactions of learners' emotions during Foreign Language Learning (FLL) is still an under-researched area within Second and Foreign Language Acquisition. Although negative emotions such as foreign language anxiety have been extensively investigated, the field has recently seen a rise in research due to a new focus on positive emotions, particularly Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE). By adopting a Positive Psychology perspective, the present study explores Foreign Language Enjoyment and its dynamic dimensions in students learning German as a foreign language in universities located in northeast Italy after mainly returning to face to-face learning in an almost 'post-pandemic normality' in the current period. The first part of this research builds a theoretical framework around this positive emotion, examining previous research and the Italian context, while the second part describes the mixed-method empirical study and analyses quantitative and qualitative data collected through a questionnaire using the Short Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale and semi-structured interviews. The aim was to obtain the FLE profiles of the students, explore the effects of other internal and external variables related to their learning experience, and identify the sources and key points of particularly strong FLE episodes. The findings contribute to an emerging field that investigates what goes right in the foreign language learning experience and provide important pedagogical implications for both language teachers and learners.

Keywords: Foreign Language Enjoyment; Positive Psychology; Foreign Language Acquisition; German as a Foreign Language; University Languages Learners; Language Learner Profiles

DETAILLIERTE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Forschungszwecke: Die Auswirkungen und Interaktionen der Emotionen von Lernenden während des Fremdsprachenlernens (FSL) ist ein noch wenig erforschtes Gebiet innerhalb des Zweit- und Fremdsprachenerwerbs. Obwohl negative Emotionen wie Fremdsprachenängstlichkeit ausgiebig untersucht wurden, hat das Gebiet in letzter Zeit aufgrund eines neuen Fokus auf positive Emotionen wie Freude an Fremdsprachen (*Foreign Language Enjoyment*, FLE) einen Aufschwung in der Forschung erfahren. Durch die Annahme der Positiven Psychologie untersucht die vorliegende Studie FLE und seine dynamischen Dimensionen bei Deutsch als Fremdsprache lernenden Universitätsstudenten an Universitäten im Nordosten Italiens, nachdem sie in der gegenwärtigen fast „postpandemischen Normalität“ hauptsächlich zum Präsenzunterricht zurückgekehrt sind. Der erste Teil dieser Forschung baut einen theoretischen Rahmen um diese positive Emotion auf und untersucht frühere Forschungen und den italienischen Kontext, während der zweite Teil die empirische Studie beschreibt und quantitative und qualitative Daten analysiert. Ziel war die Untersuchung der FLE-Profile der Universitätsstudenten, die Erforschung der Auswirkungen anderer interner und externer Variablen in Bezug auf ihre Lernerfahrung und die Identifizierung der Quellen und Schlüsselpunkte besonders starker FLE-Episoden.

Forschungsmethodik: Die Studie verfolgte einen Mixed-Methods-Ansatz. Allgemeine deskriptive Statistiken und Inferenzstatistiken wurden auf die aus einem webbasierten Fragebogen mit der *Short Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale* (S-FLES) gesammelten quantitativen Daten angewendet, während thematische Inhaltsanalyse für die Analyse der aus einer offenen Frage im Fragebogen und halbstrukturierten Online-Interviews erhobenen qualitativen Daten verwendet wurde. Teilnehmer an dieser Studie waren 81 Studenten der Ca' Foscari Universität Venedig, der Universität Bologna und der Universität Padua. Eine große Mehrheit waren weibliche, italienische Muttersprachler/innen, 18-21 Jahre alt, studierten einen Bachelor, studierten Germanistik und nahmen an Präsenzveranstaltungen teil.

Ergebnisse: Die Ergebnisse der Analyse deuten darauf hin, dass die Teilnehmer in dieser Stichprobe während ihrer Deutschlernerfahrung einen mäßig hohen FLE erlebten und diese FLE war besonders mit den Dimensionen „Lehrerwertschätzung“ (*Teacher Appreciation*)

verbunden, gefolgt von ihrer „persönlichen Freude“ (*Personal Enjoyment*), und viel weniger mit ihrer „sozialen Freude“ (*Social Enjoyment*), basierend auf der Beobachtung niedriger FLE-Niveaus in dieser letzten Dimension. Diese Ergebnisse stimmen mit anderen früheren Studien überein, die normalerweise auch diese Aufstellung in Bezug auf die FLE-Dimensionswerte aufweisen. Die FLE-Niveaus dieser Studie sind nicht völlig unerwartet, da es eine selbstgewählte Stichprobe verwendete und hauptsächlich aus Germanistikstudenten bestand, die möglicherweise bereits eine positive Einstellung und ein Interesse an der deutschen Sprache hatten. Andererseits kann das geringe Maß an sozialer Freude auf den Lehrmethodik der Universitäten selbst zurückzuführen sein, der zu einer distanzierteren sozialen Beziehung zu Lehrern und Kommilitonen führen kann.

Darüber hinaus deuten die Ergebnisse darauf hin, dass es zumindest für diese Stichprobe keine signifikanten Auswirkungen von Variablen wie Alter, Geschlecht, Mehrsprachigkeit, Beherrschung der Fremdsprache, Hauptfach und Unterrichtsmethode auf die FLE von Universitätsstudenten gibt. Die Ergebnisse deuteten jedoch auf einen Trend zu höheren FLE bei Teilnehmern hin, die bereits mehrere Sprachen beherrschten, ein höheres Niveau in Deutsch erreicht hatten, Hybridklassen besuchten, jünger waren und aus anderen Studiengängen stammten. Die Ergebnisse stimmten teilweise mit früheren Untersuchungen überein, mit Ausnahme der Altersvariable, die einen gegenteiligen Trend aufwies. Mögliche Erklärungen waren die mangelnde Homogenität in den Stichprobengruppen in Bezug auf einige Variablen wie Geschlecht, Alter, Studienfach und Unterrichtsmodalität sowie die besonderen Merkmale des italienischen Lehrkontexts an Universitäten nach der Pandemie in der aktuellen Zeit.

Als nächstes deuteten die Ergebnisse darauf hin, dass die Teilnehmer am häufigsten Aspekte im Zusammenhang mit dem FL-Lehrer als Quellen für denkwürdige FLE-Episoden identifizierten, gefolgt von ihrer eigenen privaten oder persönlichen Sphäre, während Quellen aus ihrem sozialen Umfeld im Klassenzimmer viel seltener genannt wurden. Diese Ergebnisse stimmten mit in früheren Untersuchungen beobachteten Quellen überein. Am häufigsten wurde in diesem Zusammenhang ein ermutigender Lehrer genannt, der häufig ein Schlüsselfaktor für erfolgreiche Interventionen war, die zu einem Gefühl des Stolzes der Studenten auf ihre Deutschkenntnisse oder zu einem plötzlichen Bewusstsein ihrer FL-Fortschritte führten. Einige Teilnehmer berichteten in derselben Episode sowohl von negativen als auch von positiven Emotionen wie FLE, gefolgt von einem starken persönlichen

Gefühl der Zufriedenheit oder des Stolzes nach einer herausfordernden Lernaktivität oder dem Erhalt von Lob, und empfanden sogar Deutsch als eine persönliche, bedeutende Herausforderung. Die freundliche und aufgeschlossene Haltung des Lehrers gegenüber Universitätsstudenten und das Interesse des Lehrers an den Vorlieben und Meinungen der Studenten waren relevante FLE-Quellen, die auch mit anderen berichteten Themen wie einem interessanten Unterrichtsthema und der Verwendung von Spielen oder lustigen Aktivitäten im FS-Klassenzimmer verknüpft wurden. Bezüglich der wenigen Nennungen im Zusammenhang mit dem sozialen Umfeld berichteten die Teilnehmer über eine entspannte und positive Atmosphäre im Unterricht, fehlenden Druck oder Angst vor Verurteilung durch ihre Kommilitonen oder den Lehrer und die Förderung sozialer Bindungen mit ihren Kommilitonen. Alle identifizierten Quellen und Schlüsselaspekte deuten darauf hin, dass die Interaktion zwischen Emotionen von Natur aus dynamisch ist und verschiedene Akteure oder positive und negative Emotionen gleichzeitig einbezieht. Dies weist auch auf seine Nützlichkeit aus einer PP-Perspektive als aktivierende Emotion hin, die hilft, Resilienz aufzubauen und die Auswirkungen negativer Emotionen zu vermitteln, was weiter zum Wohlbefinden im Klassenzimmer beiträgt.

Pädagogische Implikationen: Genauer gesagt hat diese Forschung gezeigt, dass die Förderung von „Lehrerwertschätzung“, „persönlicher Freude“ und „sozialer Freude“ für ein positives Sprachenlernen im Fremdsprachenunterricht von entscheidender Bedeutung sind. FS-Lehrer sollten sich besonders um die Schaffung einer emotional sicheren Unterrichtsumgebung bemühen, in der sich Universitätsstudenten zum Erkunden und Experimentieren mit dem FL ermutigt fühlen. Dazu sind herausfordernde Aufgaben, gegenseitiges Vertrauen, Drucklosigkeit, Lob und Ermutigung sowie der Einsatz bestimmter Strategien oder Materialien wie interaktive Spiele, authentisches Kulturmaterial, praktische Anwendung des FL in realen Situationen, Förderung sozialer Interaktionen zwischen Lernenden und einfühlsamer Unterricht scheinen FLE zu fördern. Außerdem sollten Lehrerbildungseinrichtungen FS-Lehrkräften das notwendige PP-theoretische und praktische Wissen für eine positive Spracherziehung vermitteln, wie z. B. Bewusstsein für FLE und andere positive Emotionen, und deren Anwendung im Unterricht zur Erreichung eines allgemein verbesserten Wohlbefindens und ein erfolgreiches Fremdsprachenlernen.

Grenzen der Forschung und zukünftige Forschungsrichtungen: Einige festgestellte Einschränkungen in dieser Studie waren die Stichprobengröße und ein allgemeiner Mangel an Homogenität zwischen den Gruppen in Bezug auf die unabhängigen Variablen. Außerdem verwendete die Studie eine selbst ausgewählte Stichprobe und selbstberichtete Daten, die möglicherweise zu kognitiven Verzerrungen und sozialer Erwünschtheit führen. Darüber hinaus verhinderte das Fehlen von FLE-Daten vor der Pandemie im italienischen Kontext weitere Vergleiche, während Zeit- und Ressourcenbeschränkungen die Anzahl der untersuchten soziodemografischen Variablen und die Anwendung dynamischerer Emotionsforschungsmethoden einschränkten. Daher werden Studien mit größeren Stichproben zur Erhöhung der Generalisierbarkeit der Bevölkerung und die Berücksichtigung des Effekts weniger erforschter soziodemografischer Variablen vorgeschlagen. Zukünftige Forschung könnte auch von komplexeren statistischen und Forschungsdesignmethoden unter einer PP-Perspektive profitieren, wie z. B. Längsschnittforschungsdesigns und qualitative Designs, sowie von innovativen Methoden wie dem idiodynamischen Ansatz und der L2-Emotionsansteckungsforschung, die das dynamische Zusammenspiel positiver und negativer Emotionen im Klassenzimmer als Ganzes berücksichtigen. Als abschließender Vorschlag werden weitere Studien zu positiven Emotionen und FLE-Forschung im italienischen Unterrichtskontext und in anderen Sprachen als Englisch (LOTES) besonders empfohlen. Die Schließung dieser Forschungslücke unter einer ganzheitlichen PP-Perspektive wird erheblich zu verbesserten pädagogischen Praktiken und positivem Fremdsprachenlernen in L2- und FS-Klassenzimmern beitragen.

Schlüsselwörter: Freude an Fremdsprachen, Positive Psychologie; Fremdsprachenerwerb; Deutsch als Fremdsprache; Sprachenlernende an Universitäten; Profile von Sprachlernern

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List of Abbreviations

BBT	Broaden-and-Build Theory
CVT	Control-Value Theory
ERT	Emergency Remote Teaching
FL	Foreign Language
FLA	Foreign Language Anxiety
FLE	Foreign Language Enjoyment
FLES	Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale
FLCA	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety
FLL	Foreign Language Learning
FLTE	Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment
LOTE	Languages other than English
PP	Positive Psychology
S-FLES	Short Form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

INTRODUCTION

Many people who have embarked on the particularly complex adventure that is learning a foreign language, either as an L2 or as a FL, would probably agree that it may be comparable to an emotional roller-coaster at some moments. The degree and shape of sensations vary widely, ranging from the joy of effectively expressing oneself to the strain of facing circumstances in which you are expected to properly handle a key conversation with a native speaker of that language (Plonsky et al., 2022). When learners' stories, anecdotes, and narratives of their own L2 and/or FL learning experiences are heard and analysed, it is clear and unmistakable that emotions, along with cognition, mediate learning as the core element within the process itself (Swain, 2013). Despite this, emotions have generally been neglected and underestimated for many years within Second and Foreign Language Acquisition. Though negative emotions such as foreign language anxiety have received substantial attention, the discipline has lately witnessed an increase in research due to a new emphasis on positive emotions.

The advent of Positive Psychology (PP) represented a turn in the discipline for more SLA studies on a larger variety of emotions. Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), as one of the most recently investigated positive emotions, emerged in response to this shift in second and foreign language learning. In particular, both PP and emotion theory have benefited from the introduction of new theoretical means for empirical emotion investigations, in particular the holistic theoretical approach created by complementing the two main theories in PP: the Broaden-and-Build Theory (BBT) by Fredrickson (2013) and the Control-Value Theory (CVT) by Pekrun (2007). Also, consistent with the social shift in SLA caused by PP, research trends are aiming to be more context-sensitive and complex by incorporating social and cultural variables, as well as studying LOTEs instead of focusing only in English, since there is evidence to suspect that these factors and the foreign language itself also play a role in shaping learners' emotional experiences. Most previous research has focused on the Asian or American context and almost exclusively on English as a foreign language (Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021), so further research that bridges this gap is needed in order to obtain a better understanding of positive emotions across cultures and instructional contexts.

The present study explores Foreign Language Enjoyment in students learning German as a foreign language in universities located in northeast Italy after mainly returning to face

to-face learning in an almost ‘post-pandemic normality’ in the current period. The aim is to investigate and obtain a better understanding of the foreign language FLE situation, FLE levels and FLE profiles of university students in Italy learning German as a foreign language, explore the possibility of a significant effect of other internal and external variables related to the students’ learning experience, as well as to identify the sources and key points that form part of particularly strong FLE episodes from students’ own accounts. More specifically, the research questions that this study aimed to answer from an holistic PP perspective were the following: (1) Do the students experience FLE in their German language classes? If so, what is the students’ overall current level of FLE and what is the general FLE profile?; (2) Does age, gender, multilingualism, FL mastery, type of major (majors on German language, other majors), and class delivery method (remote, hybrid or face-to-face) have a significant effect on the overall FLE levels?; (3) What is identified most frequently by the students as sources and key aspects of particularly strong or memorable previous FLE experiences?. To the best of the author’s knowledge, this is the first empirical study to investigate the construct of FLE among university learners of German as a Foreign Language in the Italian post-pandemic setting, and studies on positive emotions in Italy are still scarce, which justifies shedding light on the Italian university context and on the German language.

To do this, the study adopted a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data was collected by means of an web-based online questionnaire using the Short Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES) and, subsequently, qualitative data was collected by means of an optional open question at the end of the questionnaire and online individual semi-structured interviews. Participants consisted of a total of 81 undergraduate and graduate students from different courses of study that were learning German as a foreign language in three important universities located in northeast Italy, namely, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, University of Bologna, and University of Padua. A vast majority were female, Italian native speakers, 18-21 years old, from bachelor’s degrees, pursuing German majors, and were attending face-to-face classes. After collecting the data, quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, whereas qualitative data was studied under thematic content analysis.

Finally, the present study is divided in six chapters. The first chapter will define and conceptualize emotions, analysing the characteristics, typologies and the role and relevance of emotions in SLA, while also proving a historical review by covering past traditions and

current developments of emotion research in applied educational linguistics. The second chapter will conceptualize the multidimensional construct of Foreign Language Enjoyment within SLA and FLL by analysing its various sources, internal-learner and external-learner variables, and its three dimensions, including the development of FLE research, the main relevant emotion theories applied in pursuit of an holistic theoretical framework, and the current state of the art in FLE research. Next, the third chapter will contextualize the situation of German as a Foreign Language in the Italian educational system by briefly exploring the past and current emotion research and educational context in the post-pandemic period in Italy, while also focusing on the historical, political and economic relevance and presence of the German language in Italy, particularly in Italian universities. After that, the fourth chapter introduces the aims and purpose of this study and the three research questions investigated, as well as description of the sample and context, their socio-demographic characteristics, the method and the instruments used, and a detailed account of the procedures carried out in each phase of this research's execution. Subsequently, the fifth chapter presents the quantitative results concerning the first and second research questions, which included reliability and normality test of the sample with subsequent descriptive and inferential statistics, after which it focuses on the thematic analysis results and their key thematic categories and their frequencies regarding the third research question. Lastly, the final chapter provides a detailed account and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative outcomes by addressing, each research question and interpreting them in relation to previous findings and the current context. After that, the limitations, the pedagogical implications, as well as suggestions and directions for future research in the field will be given. At the end, the conclusions will present a summary and the closing remarks for this research work.

PART I

Chapter I: Emotions and Foreign Language Learning

Anyone who has attempted to learn another language that is not their mother tongue (as an L2 or FL) will affirm that it is a wonderful journey that can also be quite emotional. The variety of feelings vary greatly in form and intensity, ranging from the excitement of effectively expressing oneself, for instance, to the tension of facing scenarios where you are expected to successfully manage a crucial interaction with a native speaker or in the native country where that language is spoken (Plonsky et al., 2022). Despite this, emotions have, in general, been neglected and underestimated in SLA literature (Swain, 2013). Not surprisingly, the long-standing discipline of emotion research in the context of L2 and FL learning has had historically quite a bumpy ride for a variety of reasons that will be discussed in this chapter.

This chapter will attempt to approach this subject and provide a comprehensive overview. In the first part, we will try to define and conceptualize this phenomenon from a psychological point of view, analysing the characteristics, typologies and the role and relevance of emotions in Second Language and Foreign Language Acquisition. Then, the second part will focus on examining the history of emotions in foreign language education, covering the past phases of the research tradition in this field until the current period with the revolutionary arrival of Positive Psychology and its focus on positive emotions in applied educational linguistics.

1.1 The inseparability of emotion and cognition in language education

In spite of the fact that thought and emotion may seem unrelated at first sight, there are actually many relevant arguments to consider the two as being inextricably interconnected and to view emotion as a crucial central element that has a significant influence in all our actions. Such is the impact of emotions, that fields like neuroscience have also proposed at some point the idea that humans by nature give precedence to emotion with respect to thought, and not vice versa, highlighting this dynamic between cognition and emotion (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017)

It can be said that faint traces of an interest in emotions can be found in early Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, but this field like many other areas of study gave scant

attention to the concept of emotions in order to give priority to cognition, also seen as “rational thought”, hence neglecting the emotional nature of the educational context (Dewaele, 2005). One explanation for this unfortunate historical void dates back to Socrates’ influence in Western thinking and his absolute emphasis in reason, which created a separation and conflict between emotion and reason (Swain, 2013). Building on this foundation, the behaviourism current in psychology and structuralism in linguistics did not consider emotional aspects as relevant topics (Fredrickson, 2013; Swain, 2013).

Thus, when SLA was born as a field, the literature and the scholars addressing second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) learning granted a strong emphasis on learners’ cognitive processes, ability factors like working memory, intelligence, aptitude factors, among others, from a purely cold cognition point of view (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). In this way, emotions were not even considered as a dimension or an integral part of the L2 or FL learning experience, leaving many doubts and gaps about our understanding of emotions in the learning experience (Swain, 2013)

However, nowadays there is the awareness that learning another language entails both a cognitive and an emotional process at the same time; the extent of this relationship goes as far as being interdependent, when considered minimally, or both elements can also be viewed as inseparable, when considered in its maximal expression (Swain, 2013). The fact that emotions, and its relationship with cognition, are in charge of mediating learning as the core element within the process itself is evident and indisputable when learners’ accounts, anecdotes and narratives of their own L2 and/or FL learning experience are heard and analysed (Swain, 2013). For example, taking the statements of two L2 students named Grace and Ariel Dorfman, who at school felt emotions such as shame, embarrassment, anger or mortification caused by relative normal events during their English as L2 language learning experience, Swain (2013) highlighted how these experiences basically shaped and directed both learners’ actions and their FL learning success later, which successfully illustrates the importance of taking emotions into account when analysing second and foreign language learning procedures.

Just like Grace and Ariel, similar accounts from foreign language learners around the world who experience similar or other emotion-related phenomena during their learning path towards their L2 or FL show the overwhelming importance of emotions in these instances and

the need to consider both cognition and emotions in SLA and FLL research (Swain, 2013). To do this, we first need to grasp a comprehensive understanding of the emotional sphere.

1.1.1 Discovering emotions: a definition and conceptualization

Due to its nature itself, a complex concept such as emotion proves to be a difficult notion to define. As a popular and one of the most comprehensive definitions used in the SLA field, this work will also adopt the multidimensional definition of emotions established by Johnmarshall Reeve (2015): “Emotions are short-lived, feeling-purposive-expressive-bodily responses that help us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we face during important life events” (p. 340). This definition already starts by identifying four components that can be found within emotions. The first one is the feeling dimension, which captures the abstract or subjective experience that we so frequently mistake for emotion; the second dimension, purpose, illustrates how goal-directed an emotion is; the third dimension shows that emotion's social and communicative nature are a result of its expressive component; finally, the fourth dimension has been the subject of much research due to the possibility of identifying certain patterns of bodily reactions that go along with certain particular emotions, such as the changes in heart rate and blood pressure during particular emotions like anxiety (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

As can be seen, according to this definition, emotions contain both physical and psychological elements which can be understood as reactions to the outer world that express what is happening inside the body to the external environment; hence, this would mean that emotions have a specific purpose: emotions are fundamentally indicators of how a person is responding to current circumstances and, even if they are fleeting experiences, emotions help us adjust to our surroundings in a variety of situations (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Thus, it has been argued that it is of crucial importance to realize that emotions are much more complex than just the sum of their constituent elements and that they arise as a result of the integration of these four factors (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

On the other hand, it is also necessary to establish the difference between emotions and other related notions that may commonly be confused with emotions: mood and temperament. In contrast to emotions, which are brief reactions to particular events

experienced in a personal manner, moods are longer-lasting and more diffused feelings and it is generally more challenging for a person to pinpoint their previous experience as the source of a mood because, unlike emotions, they lack the potential to trigger a particular action: moods function in the background of conscious experience and emotions at the foreground; regarding the notion of temperament, it refers in a broader sense to a person's consistent propensity to feel particular emotions and moods, which is a personality-level concept more connected to physiology (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

Building on this base, it is evident that a proper conceptualization in order to gain an understanding of the nature of emotions and its dimensions is essential for developing a much more solid research and pedagogical implications (Dewaele & Li, 2020). Despite the fact that later there have been copious research on emotions in the field of SLA and FLL, less focus has been placed on clarifying how emotions are conceptualized and the underlying theories connected to L2 or FL learning (Dewaele & Li, 2020). Besides Reeve's (2015) multidimensional definition, Fredrickson (2001), also conceptualized emotions as a "multicomponent response tendencies that emerge over relatively short time periods," and made a first distinction between positive and negative emotions and how they serve various purposes. According to tradition in the psychology field, there are two primary approaches to conceptualizing emotions in L2 learning: the basic approach and the dimensional approach (Dewaele & Li, 2020).

According to the basic approach, there are a few universally recognized basic emotions that are associated with particular behaviours and propensities for certain actions, and generally these six basic emotions have been identified as joy, surprise, fear, disgust, anger, and sorrow (Dewaele & Li, 2020). Contrary to this universalist viewpoint, the dimensional approach contends that emotions are instead unique constructs of three distinct, bipolar dimensions, meaning pleasure/valence, arousal/activation, and dominance; however, it has been the basic approach the preferred theory that has governed SLA research and this is evident, for example, in the measurement method developed for emotional aspects (Dewaele & Li, 2020). Once a definition and conceptualization of emotions has been established, it is also crucial in the SLA and FLL disciplines to determine the role that emotions play in contexts where languages are learnt and in which specific areas their influence is manifested.

1.1.2 The role of emotions in SLA and FLL

As stated before, the relevance of human emotions cannot be underestimated because they are not casual, they serve a purpose. The priority of emotions becomes apparent from the earliest stage of life as babies by responding emotionally to every major input and this continues through our whole lifespans as a manner of reaction to events; thus, even language learning as a life experience is based and thoroughly linked with emotional experiences (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). In this sense, emotional responses are adaptive and serve as the driving force behind our actions as can be exemplified by particular negative active emotions such as fear or anger, which are difficult to ignore and take precedence over the conscious experience (Reeve, 2015).

Since emotions are fundamental in order to respond and adapt to new situation, they also can have an influence over the foreign language learning context and may either improve or hinder the learning and communication processes, but this influences actually operates in very complex ways, so it is not a simple matter of assuming that there are “good” or “bad” emotions for learning because all emotions are inherently adaptive and it all depends on how they are adapted according to the time and circumstances (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Whether an emotion is positive or negative, pleasant or unpleasant, it has the ability to contribute to growth and well-being, since even unpleasant or undesired emotions may lead to positive results, such as when anger motivated Ariel to achieve a challenging goal such as learning a foreign language abroad or when embarrassment in her foreign language class inspired Grace to put more effort into her learning (Swain, 2013). Positive and negative emotions, however, will be perceived quite differently by a person because they produce fundamentally distinct sorts of experiences and because they have different purposes (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). This happens by means of schemas, which are mental frameworks for organizing information and interpreting events that combine different internal physiological signals (e.g., a fast heartbeat) with the social context (e.g., giving a first speech in the L2), an urge to act (e.g., the thought of stopping giving the speech), and specific cognitions (e.g., the audience's confused expressions) which would produce an emotional response such as an episode of language anxiety in this examples (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017).

In learning a foreign language, a person may have to face a very cognitive-demanding and, as we have seen, also intense emotional activity. Learning a language is challenging, and the experience can be emotionally taxing, but most of the time language students may find themselves in a position where teachers ask them to use rational thought and cognition when they are actually experiencing strong emotions that are mediating their foreign language learning experience (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Due to this central role of emotion in second and foreign language learning, numerous empirical research have demonstrated that the variables influencing the impact on foreign language teaching and learning are tied to the learners themselves, and they play a major role. Emotional aspects of language learning such as attitudes, motivation, interest, confidence, and anxiety are frequently ignored by teachers in favour of the cognitive aspects, but mediate learning nevertheless (Lu, 2022).

This, scholarly interest has been drawn to a wide range of emotions that language learners feel from linguistic, pedagogical, and social situations. In fact, MacIntyre & Vincze (2017) identified a list of 19 fundamental emotions that are closely associated to L2 acquisition while conducting research in the context of German as a Foreign Language in Italian Secondary Schools: positive emotions including “joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love”, and negative emotions including “anger, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, guilt, hate, sadness, feeling scared and being stressed” (Dewaele & Li, 2020). However, throughout its history, emotion-related aspects had been, although subtly, mainly addressed by research focused on foreign language motivation or on foreign language anxiety, a negative emotion, while basic emotions had not been prioritized (Dewaele & Li, 2018; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Recent studies are attempting to correct this imbalance and bridge this gap, so the number of studies including a wider range of emotions in the SLA and FLL field has grown exponentially in the last decade (Dewaele & Li, 2018).

1.2 A history of emotion research in SLA and FLL

It can be said that research on emotion in the context of L2 learning actually does not have a short history, as one might initially think; however the attention may have unfortunately been pointed to only one emotion: anxiety (Plonsky et al., 2022). As the field advances, the study

of anxiety and other emotions has grown and progressed in numerous ways throughout the years, as can be attested by the several studies that have attempted to synthesize the various advancements of this subject (Plonsky et al., 2022). The advent of new and innovative theoretical frameworks and perspectives, however, has inspired scholars to seek beyond anxiety for a wide variety of distinct L2 and FL learning emotions, carrying with them improved emotional granularity and methodological diversity, making it possible for the field to extend its scope and reach maturity (Dewaele & Li, 2020).

1.2.1 The three phases of emotion research in SLA

Despite its initial heavy emphasis on anxiety, research on emotions linked to second and foreign language learning has advanced and experienced great innovation. In order to obtain a more defined picture and a better understanding of the stages experienced by this field, this work will adopt Dewaele & Li’s (2020) classification and divide the history of emotion research in SLA and FLL into three general phases according to the research approach and primary categories of emotions studied in each phase: the emotion avoidance phase, the anxiety-prevailing phase, and the positive and negative emotions phase (see Figure 1).

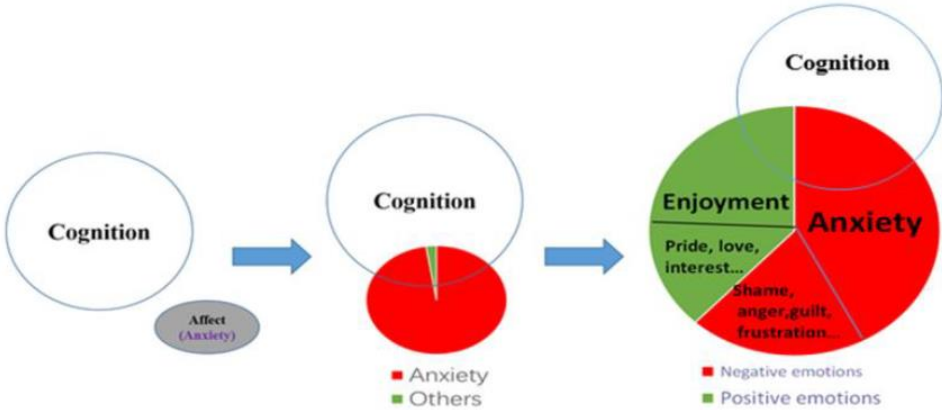


Figure 1. An approximate visualization of the three stages of emotion research in SLA and FLL literature (Dewaele & Li, 2020).

- **Emotion Avoidance Phase:** The first phase (around the early 1960s and the middle of the 1980s), could be referred to as the “Emotion Avoidance Phase” because, while not necessarily denying the existence of emotions, the role of emotions in language learning was seen as irrational during a historical period that clearly favoured hard “scientific” cognitive factors and established a separation and conflict between cognition and emotion (Prior, 2019; Swain, 2013). This cognitive viewpoint that regarded emotions as “irrational” had long dominated SLA research, and cognitive researchers argued that the field should focus on observable data from learners' speech such as phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, and speech acts, so as to gain scientific rigor in a methodical way and by means of quantitative and statistical analysis (Dewaele, 2022a). Besides the fact that affective elements were often thought to have a little impact on the learning experience, the difficulty of a reliable measurement of a non-physical factor such as emotion was another cause for this prioritization of cognition (Swain, 2013). This phase was also characterized by confusing, scarce and vague studies on foreign language anxiety; actually, the concept of “anxiety” and its measurement were unclear and not consistently connected to the particular area of L2 learning (Dewaele & Li, 2020).
- **Anxiety-Prevailing Phase:** The second phase, referred to as the Anxiety-Prevailing Phase, occurred between the middle of the 1980s and the beginning of the 2010s with a growing understanding of the relationship between emotion and cognition, and the critical role that emotion plays in language learning, although the exclusive focus on the negative emotion of anxiety still persisted (MacIntyre, 2017). The Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen (1985) and the ground-breaking research on foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) by Horwitz et al. (1986) marked the beginning of this period (Dewaele & Li, 2020). Krashen’s (1985) hypothesis highlighted the importance of emotions by arguing that when a learner is feeling intense negative emotions, such as anxiety, an affective filter will be activated and it will limit the quantity of comprehensible input that may reach the language acquisition device (LAD), hindering language learning; on the other hand, the filter will be lower if the learner is experiencing positive emotions, which would allow more input to be gathered and a

better language performance. This theory, revolutionary for its time, succeeded in reminding scholars that the affective dimension had a part in second and foreign language learning (Dewaele, 2005). Later, Horwitz et al. (1986) introduced the most widely used instrument for measuring anxiety in SLA, the 33-item FLCAS scale, marking the beginning of the “Specialized Approach” and spurring an extensive research trend on anxiety, which then became the only emotional focus (MacIntyre, 2017). Due in large part to the fact that negative emotions frequently represent immediate issues or real threat, they are perceived as more urgent, which made possible for research on negative emotions and its debilitating consequences to make significant progress (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As a result, the opportunity to also do research on positive emotions was neglected and did not emerge during this time (Wang & Jiang, 2022).

- **Positive and Negative Emotions Phase:** This third phase began in the early 2010s along with scholar’s growing interest in the psychology of language learning, and it was also around this time that the International Association for the Psychology of Language Learning was founded (Dewaele & Li, 2020). An increasing amount of attention is being paid to emotions in this third phase, where we have been for the past ten years, particularly in both positive and negative learner (and teacher) emotions as the force driving foreign language learning and teaching under the influence of Positive Psychology (Dewaele, 2019; MacIntyre, 2016). Due to the “positive renaissance” fostered by positive psychology and the benefits of positive emotions, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) incorporated the idea of Positive Psychology (PP) into SLA by drawing attention to positive and negative emotions in the language classroom and conceptualizing emotion along two separate dimensions: positive-broadening and negative-narrowing (Wang & Jiang, 2022). By building on the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions developed by Barbara Fredrickson (2003; 2001, 2004), the ways in which positive emotions are essential elements of optimal functioning were emphasized and scholarly attention was shifted to the intricate and dynamic relationship between positive and negative emotions, as well as the wellbeing of language learners (Dewaele & Li, 2020). As a result, a more robust

empirical research was developed using a wide range of epistemological and methodological approaches that have led to a deeper understanding of the function of positive and negative FL learners' and teachers' emotions in order to improve linguistic progress; thus, PP interventions have been used in schools and universities to promote instructors' and students' feelings of flow, hope, courage, well-being, optimism, creativity, happiness, grit, resilience, and laughter (Dewaele et al., 2019).

1.2.2 The advent of Positive Psychology: a turn to positive emotions

In the last twenty years, the term “PP” has gained popularity in the psychological community. As a systematic discipline, PP was originally introduced in Martin Seligman's 1988 Presidential Address of the American Psychological Association (Shao et al., 2020). Positive psychology can be defined as a field of study that tries to better understand the circumstances and mechanisms underlying the flourishing or thriving of social groups and individuals (Gable & Haidt, 2005). The fundamental tenet of PP is that people possess positive attributes and are inherently motivated to pursue happy and fulfilling lives; hence, psychology was thought to need a more optimistic view by focusing on aspects like character strengths, happiness, love, and wisdom instead of being focused in abnormalities or illnesses (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

In a more detailed account, at the subjective level, PP is about positive experiences, such as well-being and contentment, flow, joy, sensory pleasures, as well as optimistic future perceptions, hope, and faith. At the individual level, positive character traits are important, including the ability to love, courage, interpersonal skills, perseverance, originality, and wisdom. At the collective level, it's about the institutions and civic qualities that help people become better citizens, such as accountability, nurturing, altruism, tolerance, and work ethic (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). However, it should be made clear that positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, faith or self-deception to see a distorted version of reality; rather, “it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexity” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 7). In recent years, a sense of happiness (positive, engagement, and meaning) is no longer the main focus of PP; instead, it now emphasizes a

more complete view of well-being (Shao et al., 2020). Seligman (2011) contends that PERMA, which stands for positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment, is the key to achieving human flourishing, since in in such a state, people succeed both at a personal and institutional level: they feel alive, and thrive.

In order to reach this objective, there are three pillars on which PP research is built according to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000): positive emotions (e.g., happiness and joy), positive characteristics (e.g., strengths and virtues), and positive institutions (e.g., family and school). More specifically in SLA and FLL environments, positive feelings are viewed as a path to long-term psychological development, intellectual growth, and better well-being, which are valuable traits to cultivate for SLA, which is itself a progressively evolving process of sustained effort, motivation, interest, resilience, optimism, and similar traits (Macintyre et al., 2019). Additionally, positive characteristics like empathy, courage, optimism, and trait emotional intelligence manifest in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and can empower language learners by assisting them in identifying their own and others' strengths, overcoming language difficulties, and achieving the best learning outcomes in the L2 classroom (Shao et al., 2020). Finally, good institutions include safety, democracy, academic freedom, high standards of instruction, and peer and teacher support in order to go beyond the individual L2 learner and enhance positive traits and positive emotions for a stronger community (Khajavy et al., 2018).

Also, it has been reported that findings generally support the principles of PP, as the effectiveness of PP treatments for enhancing well-being and reducing depression has been validated by several research studies and the beneficial effects of these interventions on psychological well-being persisted after 6 months (Shao et al., 2020). Moreover, the three pillars of PP are intertwined throughout the SLA process: an L2 learner's positive traits can inspire positive emotions in others, which can spread to peers and teachers and affect the general emotional climate in the classroom and institution as a whole, which in turn would lead to a profitable experience and language development for everyone (Khajavy et al., 2018). PP as a discipline continues to advance, a more recent development in the area is the “second wave of positive psychology,” which calls for the understanding of both positive and negative processes in an integrated manner (Shao et al., 2020).

1.2.3 Positive Psychology and PP 2.0 in Applied Educational Linguistics

It can be said that educational applied linguistics provided the ideal environment for PP to grow and develop. As was previously noted, the first to explicitly introduce PP to SLA were MacIntyre and colleagues (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012) by drawing on Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (BBT) of positive emotions, arguing that instructors can assist students in managing both positive and negative emotions by implementing strategies like encouraging creativity and relaxation in language courses. Their work emphasized the significance of PP for language teaching, learning, and identified encouraging trends, including the shift toward researching positive emotional states (such as love, enjoyment, and flow) and learner strengths (such as courage and empathy) in SLA (Shao et al., 2020). Besides massively extending the variety of positive emotions studied in the modern period, namely, happiness, love, pride, among other mainly positive emotions, it has also expanded of theoretical and conceptual area to other neglected, less-pleasant emotions like shame, guilt, and boredom (Plonsky et al., 2022).

The roots of positive psychology in L2 research were strengthened by the special issue edited by MacIntyre and Mercer (2014); particularly, the development of foreign language enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) cleared the path for a systematic use of PP in SLA, and subsequently additional positive factors were discussed in this area, as can be observed in Figure 2 (Wang et al., 2021).

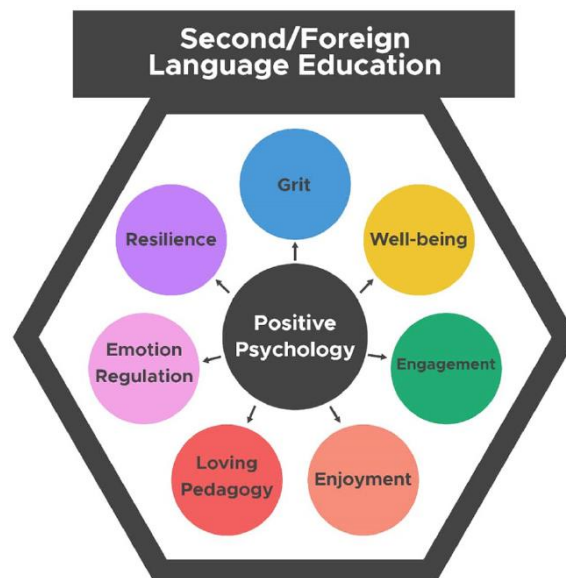


Figure 2. Positive factors that support the L2/FL learning experience (Wang et al., 2021).

Since the link between positive and negative emotions is still up for debate, some scholars have expressed concern about the possibility of positive psychology neglecting the impact of bad experiences (Wang & Marecki, 2021). In light of this issue, Wong (Wong, 2011) expanded the field of positive psychology by introducing the second wave of positive psychology (PP 2.0), also known as existential positive psychology. PP 2.0 is defined as “the scientific study of virtue, meaning, resilience, and well-being as well as evidence-based applications to improve the lives of individuals and society in the totality of life” (Wong, 2011, p. 72), and its main point focuses on bravely accepting and embracing negative emotions. PP 2.0 emphasizes the need of fostering positive emotions while facing and transforming negative ones in order to obtain a balance between the two, bringing attention to the limits of positive emotions and the potential advantages of negative experiences, which means that PP 2.0 goes beyond and adds social and cultural considerations, creating a more complex and context-sensitive discipline (MacIntyre, 2016).

Influenced by this new version of PP, the connection between positive and negative emotions in diverse linguistic, educational, and social situations has received increased attention from SLA researchers (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). An example of this trend is the investigation carried out by these two researchers, where they discovered that foreign language enjoyment and foreign language anxiety (a positive and a negative emotion) are two distinct but related dimensions: learners can experience high and lower levels of both emotions at the same time, thus rejecting the idea of a seesaw relationship; while also discovering that foreign language anxiety and enjoyment are negatively correlated with one another. In accordance with this evolution and advance in the field, one of the main positive emotions that has aroused interest and has been analysed by researchers within the framework of PP in SLA and FLL is Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE).

Chapter II: Foreign Language Enjoyment

The recent flowering of Positive Psychology provided a fresh viewpoint in the discipline and functioned as a catalyst for more SLA studies on various emotions. Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), as a new field, emerged in response to the popularity of positive psychology (PP) in second and foreign language learning. Actually, it can be said that the ideas of positive psychology are realized in applied linguistics through FLE (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). This emotion has demonstrated to be a dynamic construct that develops as a result of several internal and external contextual elements in the dynamic, complex environment of language learners (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020). Accordingly, SLA academics have been keenly interested to investigate this variable.

In the first part of this chapter, we will seek to define the concept of basic enjoyment and conceptualize the multidimensional construct of Foreign Language Enjoyment within SLA and FLL by first analysing its various sources, internal-learner and external-learner variables, and then subsequently uncovering its three dimensions. Next, the second part will focus on examining the development of FLE research from its establishment as a field and early research, covering the main relevant emotion theories applied in pursuit of an holistic theoretical framework in order to, finally, feature the latest current state of the art in FLE research.

2.1 The multidimensional construct of Foreign Language Enjoyment

Since the flourishing of Positive Psychology, second and foreign language research has focused on positive emotions such as enjoyment, love, flow, and pride, which have been the primary positive feelings discussed (Mercer & MacIntyre, 2014); however, recently researchers found enjoyment to be the most intriguing out of them, particularly in SLA (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020).

Outside the field of language learning and in the area of positive psychology, enjoyment is a mental state that promotes self-improvement and long-term happiness. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) provided the following definition:

“Enjoyment, on the other hand, refers to the good feelings people experience when they break through the limits of homeostasis—when they do something that stretches them beyond what they were—in an athletic event, an artistic performance, a good deed, a stimulating conversation.” (p. 12)

The easiest way to define FLE is to first establish the distinction between enjoyment and pleasure by comparing and contrasting the two (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Enjoyment is characterized as the positive emotion that results from pushing our own boundaries in order to encounter novel experiences and particularly in the face of challenges. On the other hand, pleasure is only the pleasant emotion that arises when our homeostatic needs (such as physical comfort, sex, and hunger) are satisfactorily placated (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Thus, enjoyment has also been described as “a sensation of novelty and accomplishment” that promotes long-term wellness and personal growth (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

According to Hagenauer and Hascher (2014), five elements make up enjoyment as a multidimensional construct: affective, cognitive, motivational, expressive, and physiological components. The affective component, as its name would imply, is concerned with the emotional world, namely the joy and excitement felt when learning a foreign language. The cognitive component, on the other hand, is concerned with the positive assessment of the learning environment, where enjoyment may be defined as the thrill one feels while embarking on a new or difficult endeavour that piques one's interest (Pekrun et al., 2007). Additionally, the motivational aspect of enjoyment addresses students' readiness to maintain that pleasant experience and inspires them to take on additional FL challenges both internally and externally (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Moreover, FLE encourages a student to engage in the foreign language experience by striving to complete the assigned activity to the fullest extent possible, so it can function as an internal and external motivation to learn, broaden experiences, and to increase learners' awareness of the language input. Finally, the physiological and expressive, the last two components, include the body's response to this positive emotional experience (Mierzwa, 2019).

In the context of language learning, foreign language enjoyment refers to the feeling of joy toward the instructor, the class, and the learning process (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). FLE is a complex and mostly stable emotion that involves an intellectual focus, heightened attention, and an ideal challenge, according to Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) research.

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) later expanded on their investigation of FLE by confirming that it is a distinct dimension from FLCA and redefined it as a “complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of challenge and perceived ability that reflect the human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks” (p. 216). In view of these results, some researchers have depicted FLE and FLCA as being antagonistic, like two wolves living inside every L2 and FL learner who constantly fighting (Gregersen et al., 2017), while others have depicted them as complementary, arguing that learners’ need to face both enjoyment and anxiety and find a balance between them (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

Regarding the literature contributing to the conceptualization of FLE, Guo & Qiu (2022) categorize the key findings into three thematic areas: the first addresses research into the mechanics of FLE, which indicates that it is a dynamic system that experiences variations either on a moment-to-moment time scale or over a longer length of time, like a semester (Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020). Additionally, it was discovered that FLE is a transmissible emotion, and enjoyment contagion may occur in interactions between teachers and students due to replication of facial expressions, gestures, and postures including laughter, smiling, nodding, and leaning forward (Talebzadeh et al., 2020). The second area makes reference to the overwhelming amount of current research indicating that FLE is a malleable concept highly susceptible to both learner-internal and teacher/classroom-specific influences (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Elahi Shirvan, Taherian, Shahnama, et al., 2021; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Li et al., 2018). The third area has studied FLE as a positive activating achievement emotion (Pekrun et al., 2007), and argued that it mediates other desirable academic results or personality attributes. According to the control-value theory of achievement emotion, students' perception of high control over their current activities and a positive assessment thereof are linked to enjoyment as a positive activating emotion. In support of this claim, a significant, positive association between FLE and students' self-reported language proficiency and/or actual academic performance has been reported in other research studies (Guo & Qiu, 2022).

As a result, FL or L2 learners who are enjoying themselves are generally thought to be able to develop more enthusiasm towards learning, deeper thinking, increased confidence, and better performance, facilitating their engagement and communication as well as their ability to process linguistic information and acquire the target language (Wang et al., 2021).

2.1.1 Sources of FLE

Both learner-external variables and learner-internal variables have been investigated in order to gain a better understanding on the causes of variance in FLE levels. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) discovered that individuals with the highest FLE scores were older, male, Western, had a more advanced level in their FL, knew more languages, and felt above average in their FL class, identifying them as learner-internal variables. On the other hand, they also included an open question and asked participants to describe a memorable FLE experience in class. In this way, they discovered that students' sense of empowerment, the classroom setting, as well as the teachers' praise and support significantly raised FLE, so they identified these aspects as learner-external variables.

2.1.1.1 Internal variables

After extensive research, the learner-internal variables identified and reported by Dewaele (2022b) are age, gender, multilingualism, trait emotional intelligence, cultural empathy, level of mastery in the FL, relative standing in the group, and FL proficiency and results. However, in this section only the ones relevant for this research work will be presented and taken into account. Dewaele (2022b) describes them as follows:

- a) **Age:** Numerous research have supported the fact that older students report higher FLE (Dewaele et al., 2018), so it was argued that a change in the predictors of FLE over time was likewise connected to an increase in FLE. In another study, Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) used a pseudo-longitudinal design to examine change over time and they discovered that whereas FLE and FLCA were constant, FLE was instead predicted by several factors over time.
- b) **Gender:** In MacIntyre and Dewaele's (2014) study, participants' FLE and FLCA scores were considerably higher for women than for men. Another study examined the same corpus and discovered that females exhibited much higher mild anxiety than males, but not higher extreme anxiety; however, they expressed greater fun and pride

in their FL performance than males (Dewaele, 2022b). Similar trends appeared in Dewaele et al. (2018), although Mierzwa (2018) discovered the reverse pattern.

- c) **Multilingualism:** Knowledge of more languages has been linked to greater FLE levels in some studies, albeit with small effect sizes (Botes et al., 2020; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), but not in others (Dewaele et al., 2018). It has not been proved yet if multilingualism has a direct or indirect effect on FLE; if there is a direct impact, multilinguals may enjoy learning new languages more since they have more experience with them. In there is an indirect impact, multilingualism may have influenced a variety of personality traits, which in turn may have shaped FLE (Dewaele, 2022b).
- d) **Level of mastery in the FL:** More advanced learners report greater levels of FLE than beginners (Dewaele et al., 2018; Mierzwa, 2018). Just as in many other disciplines such as music playing or sports, this is most likely because new FL learners may feel negatively self-conscious or frustrated about their lack of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax in the beginning stages, but an increase in their knowledge and continuous practice may promote confidence and they may feel joy in becoming more fluent and proficient in their communication in a foreign language (Dewaele, 2022b).
- e) **Relative standing in the group:** Greater levels of FLE have also been observed in students who believe their FL mastery is above average with respect to their peers. However, those who believe they do not know the FL as well as their classmates, report a lower level of FLE, and they seem to generally fear standing out under a negative light (Dewaele, 2022b).
- f) **FL proficiency and results:** As an achievement emotion, high levels of FLE have been associated to higher proficiency mark and favourable exam results (Botes et al., 2020a; Dewaele et al., 2018; Mierzwa, 2018). The degree of the association between FLE and proficiency in exam results has been demonstrated to differ between high-achievement and low-achievement students because the link was significant in the

high-achievement group but not in the low-achievement group; this may work also under a bi-directional causation (Dewaele, 2022b).

2.1.1.2 Learner-internal and learner-external variables

The learner-external variables identified and reported by Dewaele (2022b) are related to the students' environment, and the interplay between these external elements and learner-internal variables. These include attitude towards the FL, role of the teacher, school context, and societal context. Dewaele (2022b) describes them as follows:

- a) **Attitude towards the FL:** It has been observed in past research that higher levels of FLE seem connected to the fact that learners have more positive feelings towards the FL and the FL's culture (De Smet et al., 2018; Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017).
- b) **Role of the teacher:** Numerous studies have brought to light that FLE levels are heavily influenced by the teacher and it is the variable that is more frequently mentioned by students in accounts of strong FLE episodes. More specifically, it has been found that teacher's friendliness predicts FLE in all circumstances, and that FLE levels vary according to who the teacher is (Dewaele, 2022b); thus, positive feelings towards the FL teacher were shown to be important predictors of FLE. Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) evaluated FLE levels of students who had two teachers for the same FL and discovered that FLE with the primary teacher was greater than with the second teacher, for which it was hypothesized that the primary instructor may have been better at maintaining the emotional temperature in the FL classroom.
- c) **School context:** The FLE levels of language learners seems to also be influenced by the condition of a FL at an instructional institution. According to De Smet et al. (2018), elementary and secondary-level students in the French-speaking part of Belgium, who attended school under the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach, reported higher FLE levels in the target languages than students in

non-CLIL schools. Accordingly, when schools were compelled to transition to Emergency Remote Teaching due to the COVID epidemic, FLE levels dropped considerably (Dewaele, 2022b).

- d) **Societal context:** The status of a FL in a specific political, societal environment and the context of the country itself is also an important factor that has an influence on FLE levels. De Smet et al. (2018) discovered that both CLIL and non-CLIL schools had greater levels of FLE and lower levels of FLCA for English than for Dutch: learners appreciated Dutch less and did not like speaking it since Belgian Francophones view it as the language of the Flemish community, with whom they have a tense political relationship. Thus, positive emotions in the classroom were significantly more favourable towards English and English speakers.

2.1.2 FLE dimensions

It is thought that FLE is positively moderated by social contacts, namely a supportive and welcoming group of peers and a teacher who provides a range of challenging, innovative, and fascinating FL activities (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016). This led to the identification of two key dimensions of foreign language enjoyment: FLE related to teacher factors (e.g., instructional strategies and teacher's creativity) and FLE related to the environment in the FL classroom (e.g., peer interaction, positive atmosphere, positive engagement). The private component of FLE was also introduced as a further dimension (e.g. personal progress and self-development). It is believed that FL students are frequently in contact with all of the aforementioned FLE dimensions (Mierzwa, 2019).

Many studies have identified the FLE dimensions in one way or another and given them distinct names and definitions. This work will adopt the dimensions specified in the Short Form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES) developed by Botes et al. (2021), which features three dimensions, namely, teacher appreciation, personal enjoyment, and social enjoyment.

2.1.2.1 Teacher appreciation

The first dimension, called Teacher Appreciation, makes reference to the learner's perception of how well the FL instructor addresses their psychological requirements; hence, this dimension highlights the positive experiences connected to foreign language teachers' encouraging and helpful pedagogical practice (Li et al., 2018). This was the very first dimension to be discovered and numerous studies have revealed the significance of the teacher for students' overall satisfaction with FL lessons (Dewaele et al., 2018; Li et al., 2018).

2.1.2.2 Personal enjoyment

The second dimension, Personal Enjoyment, features a personal love for foreign language learning. It is expressed by the personal pleasure taken by personal advancement, exceptional performance, or engaging experiences in the FL learning experience (Li et al., 2018). Extensive research has also supported the existence of the private or personal enjoyment dimension that underlies FLE (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Li et al., 2018).

2.1.2.3 Social enjoyment

The Social Enjoyment dimension refers to the satisfaction of students' social and psychological needs in the FL classroom, which means that the social environment of the FL class as a whole and the enjoyment of the social interactions are both included in this component (Botes et al., 2021). This dimension typically includes group exercises (e.g., recitation, storytelling, and puzzles), role-playing, doing group representations, and so on; this implies that group activities empower the students and enable them to actively engaged in classroom socialization, besides using the foreign language to let them belong to a group, and this has been validated in prior studies (Li et al., 2018).

2.2 Development of Foreign Language Enjoyment Research

The relevance of FLE research stems from the fact that, out of the positive emotions encountered, enjoyment has been discovered to be the positive emotion most often experienced by FL learners (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). As the first to introduce foreign language enjoyment to the field, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) created an instrument to evaluate FLE in a large international sample: the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES). This original FLES was a 21-item self-report questionnaire with Likert scale ratings addressing various characteristics of FLE and the positive atmosphere in the FL class. During the development of the scale, 1740 foreign language learners reported their enjoyment levels (while eight items examined FLCA). The authors assessed the participants' FLCA and FLE in association to a number of independent variables (e.g., gender, age, level of education, multilingualism, FL mastery, relative standing among peers, and nationality). Inspired by this ground-breaking work, L2 researchers continued to examine a wide variety of predictors (internal vs. external) and FLE outcomes, as well as dynamic interactions between these factors from a PP standpoint (Shao et al., 2020).

FLE research has mostly focused on the conceptualization, measurement, antecedents, and correlates of FLE with other constructs within the language acquisition process, and has been explored from different research perspectives. According to the available evidence, FLE has frequently been studied empirically in five general areas (Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2022): FLE and its combined effect with foreign language anxiety (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016), the independence of FLE and FLA constructs (Dewaele et al., 2016; Li et al., 2018), FLE predictors and the association between FLE and language performance (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018), and the dynamicity of FLE in the microsystem of a foreign language class (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017).

In this sense, many empirical studies also addressed and examined these variables in various L2 contexts around the world, including international foreign language contexts (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016), a Canadian French-as-an-L2 context, a Japanese EFL context, an American Arabic-as-an-L2 context, Iranian EFL contexts, Romanian EFL contexts, a Hungarian EFL context, Chinese EFL contexts, among others (Dewaele & Li, 2020). On the other hand, research on FLE sources and dimensions has almost consistently suggested that teacher-related factors are more essential than other learner-related factors in

FLE (Wang et al., 2021). Teachers' emotional support, humour, level of friendliness, respect for students, tone of voice, and positive mood were found to greatly impact learners' FLE; thus, instructors have an important role in fostering enjoyment in the FL learning ecosystem (Wang et al., 2021).

Regarding the methodology used to evaluate FLE, several studies used mixed-methods techniques, which also allowed participants' voices to be heard in descriptions of enjoyable moments in their FL classes or during follow-up interviews (Wang et al., 2021). In this sense, Botes et al. (2021) made one of the significant contributions in terms of instruments by creating the S-FLES with English, French, and Spanish language learners. According to the authors, this short version of the FLE scale offers a more convenient measure of FLE that is valid and reliable and that may readily be incorporated along any battery of tests examining other individual variables in FL learning (Botes et al., 2021). As a dynamic and complex construct, FLE has also been examined strictly from a qualitative standpoint; qualitative instruments were used in these investigations to evaluate single subjects on a case-to-case basis (Dewaele & Li, 2020). Results from some of these studies, as reported in Dewaele and Li (2020), mainly revealed that pleasure and love were the most frequently felt positive emotions and that FLE developed in dynamic and unique ways, starting with the first contact with the FL and continuing into the present and the future. Finally, one of the central parts of any research methodological framework, namely the theories applied to the analysis of FLE research, will be presented in the next section.

2.2.1 Major emotion theories in FLE research

Although empirical investigations have found potential causes and effects of emotions in L2 learning, the underlying theories have received less attention. Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis has been adopted by some, but as Swain (2013) sensibly points out, Krashen's theory is too simplistic and fails to appropriately conceive the dynamic and complex nature and effects of negative or positive emotions in FL language education. Nevertheless, introducing PP to SLA has added new theoretical means to empirical investigations on emotions, particularly on emotion causation (Dewaele & Li, 2020): the two primary PP theories are the Broaden-and-Build Theory (BBT) by Fredrickson (2013) and the Control-Value Theory (CVT) by Pekrun (2007). However, it has been argued that current

FLE research is far from being appropriately theorized, since only few of these studies have applied the aforementioned frameworks (Guo & Qiu, 2022).

Actually, the “emotional wave” under the PP perspective was developed largely because of the broaden-and-build hypothesis; on the other hand, a small number of contemporary SLA research has tentatively used the control-value theory (Dewaele & Li, 2020). It has been suggested that the two PP theories adequately complement each another and are able to be combined in emotion research as a holistic framework in order to establish theoretical triangulation (Shao et al., 2020).

2.2.1.1 Broadening-and-build theory

One of the most significant achievements of PP so far has been the meaningful distinction between positive and negative emotions (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). According to Fredrickson's (2001, 2013) broaden-and-build hypothesis, negative emotions tend to be focused and connected with specific thought-action trajectories, whereas positive emotions tend to lead to expansive thinking that broadens a person's consciousness. This implies that individuals in a positive emotional state, for example, will notice more objects in their visual field, engage more in social relationships, and feel more inclined to act in a greater variety of ways than those in a negative emotional state.

Fredrickson's (2013) BBT explains that positive emotions work in at least five significant ways: (a) positive emotions tend to extend people's attention and thinking, conducing to exploration and play, new experiences and learning; (b) positive emotion aids in undoing the lasting aftereffects of negative emotions; (c) positive emotion boosts resilience by eliciting useful responses to stressful experiences, such as increasing cardiovascular recovery and emphasizing feelings of enjoyment and interest when under stress; (d) positive emotion fosters the development of personal resources, such as social bonds, intellectual resources developed via creative play, and even self-preservation strategies developed by young animals during rough-and-tumble play; (e) positive emotions can be part of an upward spiral towards greater wellbeing in the future, basically reversing the vicious cycle. Such a positive spiral is feasible because the acquisition of resources through positive emotions persists in time after the emotional reaction has ceased. Thus, positive emotions are more than just the absence of

negative: they actively construct health and well-being (Fredrickson, 2001). Figure 1 depicts a graphic summary of how the upward spiral of this broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions is built.

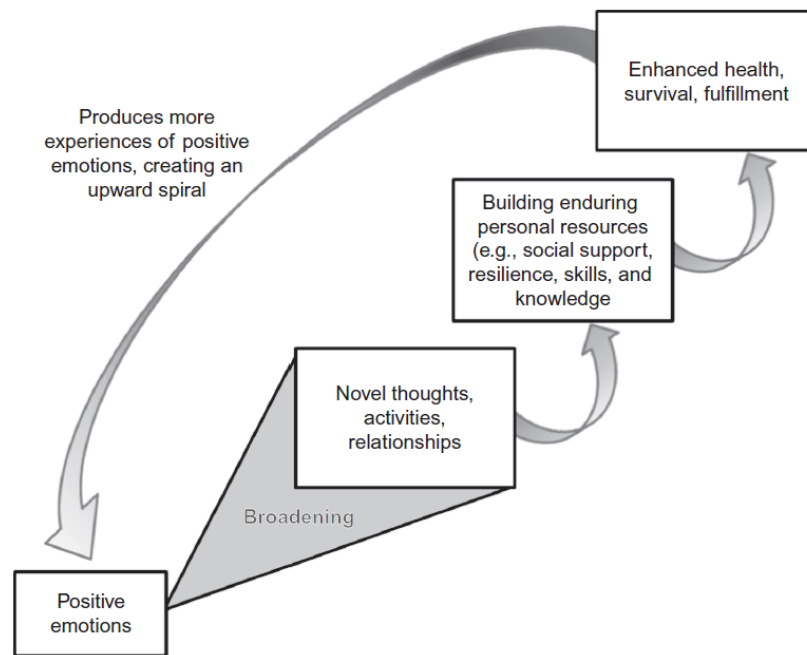


Figure 3. Steps of the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2013).

The Broaden-And-Build Theory, as the name implies, can be further conceptualized in two phases: the broaden hypothesis and the build hypothesis (Fredrickson, 2013). Numerous studies have established evidence of the broadening effect by documenting positive emotion-related impacts on steering performance, task switching, extension of the social domain, and generally an expansion of a person's visual, semantic, social, and bodily awareness. The second component, the build hypothesis, on the other hand, contends that people exhibit more expanded and relaxed body postures and more inclusive and connected social perceptions when they are experiencing good emotions (Fredrickson, 2013). Numerous studies have supported the build hypothesis, demonstrating that people who express and feel positive emotions more frequently than others are more resourceful, resilient, socially connected, and more likely to operate at their best.

In summary, the build function is performed by a temporarily broadened scope of awareness, resulting in a type of consciousness inside individuals that includes a wider range of ideas, activities, and precepts than usual (Fredrickson, 2013). An example of this can be found throughout history: resources accumulated through positive emotions increased the likelihood that our ancestors would experience subsequent positive emotions, with their broaden-and-build benefits, creating an upward spiral toward improved probabilities of survival, health, and fulfilment, which certainly demonstrates the need to look beyond the immediate pleasant experience to understand the long-term role of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2013). There is also empirical evidence that positive emotional experiences contribute to the development of personal and social resources for the future, as well as leading to more social connections and optimized functioning through broad-minded coping mechanisms (Fredrickson, 2013). Thus, this upward spiral is interactive, and also has the ability to actively contribute to second and foreign language acquisition and communication (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017).

Therefore, according to BBT, the direct effect of positive emotions in second or foreign language learning is an increase in students' awareness of linguistic input and understanding of language forms, as well as an increase in the use of different problem-solving techniques, and the expansion of learners' foreign or second language competence (Boudreau et al., 2018). Furthermore, positive emotions can lessen the effect of negative emotions emerging from language learning challenges, and establish social bonds in class among language learners and teachers (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020).

2.2.1.2 Control-value theory

Educational psychology provided a second theoretical theory for emotion research in SLA: Pekrun's Control-Value theory of Achievement Emotions (Pekrun et al., 2007). Achievement emotions are emotions associated with achievement actions or outcomes: for example, a learner will enjoy the learning process if they find the learning tasks interesting and believe they can complete them successfully; however, if the learner does not value the task or fails to grasp the learning objective, they will not appreciate the learning activity (Wang & Marecki,

2021). Accordingly, these achievement emotions are particularly spread among educational settings (Dewaele, 2022b).

As an integrative framework for academic settings, CVT investigates how academic emotions and learning satisfaction relate to one another, while considering learning satisfaction as the “achievement” (Pekrun et al., 2007). According to Pekrun et al. (2007), the theory is organized in a three-dimension taxonomy containing the aspects of valence, activation, and objective focus: (a) ‘valence,’ or pleasantness of the achievement emotions is the distinction between positive and negative emotions; (b) ‘activation’ pertains to the distinction between physically activating emotions and deactivating emotions; (c) ‘objective focus’ distinguishes between activity-related achievement emotions connected to ongoing activities and outcome-related achievement emotions from previous or upcoming results of these activities.

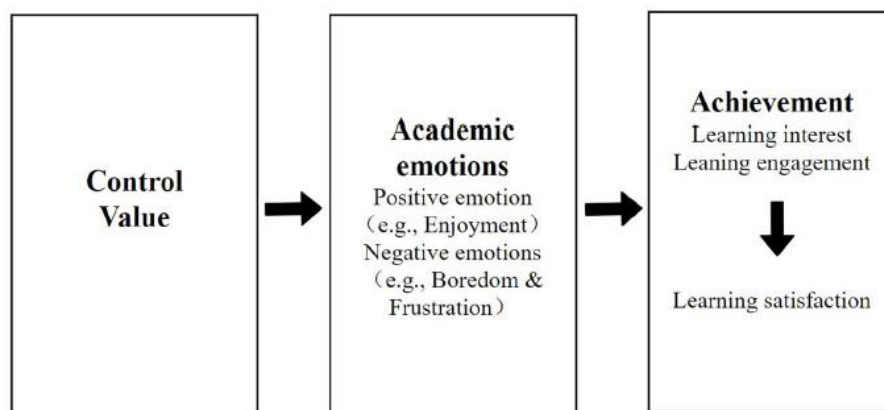


Figure 4. Graphic flow representation of the Control-value Theory (Pekrun, 2006).

The central part of the theory further proposes that subjective control and value appraisals are the proximal determinants of achievement emotions, meaning that they influence academic performance by interacting with students' interest and motivation to learn, use of learning strategies, and learning regulation styles (Pekrun, 2006). So, several appraisals have been introduced to explain emotion causation, but the most relevant ones are the appraisal of control and the appraisal of value (Pekrun et al., 2007). The ‘appraisal of control’ relates to an individual’s perception of their capacity to exert control over actions that are relevant to achieving goals or the likelihood of doing so; while ‘appraisal of value’ describes how actions and outcomes are seen in terms of importance, relevance, and meaning. The

theory further distinguishes between internal and extrinsic value appraisals: ‘intrinsic value appraisal’ refers to appreciating achievement activities and outcomes for what they are worth regardless of their practical use; on the other hand, ‘extrinsic value appraisal’ refers to the perception of the practical utility of activities and outcomes for the accomplishment of other goals (Pekrun, 2006).

As can be imagined, activity-related and outcome-related achievement emotions are interesting for the SLA and FLL research field. Achievement emotions associated with activities are thought to be influenced by both the value and controllability of an activity (Pekrun, 2006). For instance, a student will feel enjoyment if they feel competent while completing a learning task and find the learning material interesting, but it is anticipated that boredom will be triggered if the learning task lacks meaning or is unchallenging (Li, 2021). It is also believed that outcome-related achievement emotions are triggered by the value and controllability appraisals (Pekrun, 2006). For example, a student may look forward to an upcoming English exam and feel joy if they place considerable value on their success, believe that they will pass with no problems and have confidence in their performance (Li, 2021). In other words, the increase in enjoyment levels is proportional to the self-perceived ability to control the exam results and the subjective value placed on these results (Li, 2021).

Following this line of reasoning, some researchers have used a CVT approach to investigate L2 emotions under a PP perspective, arguing that emotions in L2 learning might also be seen as achievement emotions (Li, 2021). Focusing more specifically on enjoyment, the three-dimensional taxonomy and CVT's perspective define enjoyment as a major element of achievement emotions: an activity-related, positive, and activating achievement emotion that is linked to students' high control and positive value perceptions of current achievement-related activities, which has an influence on an individual's academic performance (Pekrun et al., 2007). Thus, it can be said that empirical data shows that CVT also has a great potential in foreign language enjoyment research under a PP perspective.

2.2.1.3 Towards an holistic theoretical approach

As mentioned earlier, it has been suggested that both the Broaden-and-Build Theory and the Control-Value Theory can complement each other and have the potential to be integrated in

order to apply an holistic and more comprehensive theoretical approach to better capture the complexity and dynamisms of FLE. According to Dewaele and Li (2020), both theories feature the following overlaps and distinctions when applied to SLA and FLL research.

The major point of agreement between these theories is that both emphasize the importance of positive emotions in learners' performance and well-being (Dewaele, 2022b). Two important points sum up the overlapping elements between them (Dewaele & Li, 2020): First, both theories highlight the unique roles that positive and negative emotions play in influencing cognitive, social, and psychological processes, emphasizing the need for an holistic approach to emotions. Second, both discuss the vital part that positive emotions play in influencing well-being and performance. Since the introduction of PP, emotion research in SLA has mostly focused on the unique function of emotions (Dewaele & Li, 2020).

Despite their similarities and points in common, the two theories have several clear differences. According to Dewaele and Li (2020), these include the following five distinctions: In the first place, CVT has a smaller scope and concentrates only on achievement-related emotions, which means that it focuses mostly on educational contexts, whereas BBT includes all emotions. Second, in contrast to BBT, which simply separates emotions categorically, CVT provides a three-dimensional taxonomy to define achievement emotions: this shows that while CVT is more similar to the dimensional method, BBT is built upon the basic emotion approach. Third, CVT takes into account both the antecedents and outcomes of achievement emotions, as opposed to the BBT approach, which only considers the broad impact of emotions. Fourth, CVT addresses the reciprocity and bidirectionality of emotions, but BBT lacks this approach. Finally, BBT highlights the crucial role that positive emotions play in undoing the effects of negative emotions, while CVT does not take into account this interplay. In order to adequately implement an holistic approach, it is important to be aware of both overlaps and distinctions.

2.2.2 Current state of Foreign Language Enjoyment research

Recently, a variety of research developments specific to the realm of emotion and individual differences can be noted. According to Plonsky et al. (2022), these innovations include an interest in the development of new scales and in evaluating their psychometric qualities. Also,

the discipline has improved recently and adopted more sophisticated quantitative approaches, such as structural equation modelling and latent variable modelling (Plonsky et al., 2022). Research trends are rapidly expanding to new perspectives of emotion research and approaches are evolving and becoming more innovative. According to Wang and Jiang (2022), research is developing towards cutting-edge methodologies such as ecological viewpoints for FLE inside the microsystem of the classroom (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020), the idiodynamic approach (Boudreau et al., 2018), among others.

Aside from theoretical and methodological progress, emotion research has explored uncharted ground on at least two additional fronts according to Plonsky et al (2022). The first is about the objective of emotion studies and how emotions work: recent studies have begun to use experimental manipulations to generate and induce particular emotions in learners and/or clarify the impact of emotions on foreign language learning. The other concerns the settings and populations of interest in this field: there has been ongoing concerns about the limitations of the sampling practices and the restricted populations studied in applied linguistics, so studies in the last decade have extended the contextual and demographic limits of research on emotion and language learning (Plonsky et al., 2022): these have included a broad variety of target languages, settings (e.g., study abroad, technology-mediated environments), and populations (e.g., heritage learners). Regarding the contexts related to countries or cultures, aside from research in Western settings, an increasing number of FLE investigations have targeted Asian countries, where most studies have focused particularly in the Chinese educational context (Wang et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, the vast majority of studies on positive and negative emotions in second or foreign language acquisition have focused on learners of Indo-European languages, particularly English as a Second or Foreign Language, and this is still the language that currently focuses most of the field's attention (Wang & Jiang, 2022). It has been argued that it is critical to broaden research limits to include languages other than English (LOTEs) in order to avoid drawing generalizations based on a single language (Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). The relevance of the context and the effect of the target language have already been highlighted by De Smet et al. (2018)'s investigation, where the historical, political context, and inter-group relations between the francophone and Dutch-speaking communities, as well as the type of school system, shaped the learners' FLE (Dewaele et al., 2019). Hence, L2 and FL learning is more than just balancing the positive and negative at a personal level, but it

also must seriously consider the context and environment. As MacIntyre et al. (2019) state: “The complexity also extends to a perception of the learner as an individual who is set into a sociocultural context. Language learning and teaching are by their very nature intercultural experiences” (p. 269).

Chapter III: German as a Foreign Language in Italy

According to what we have learned so far, research shows that positive and negative emotions frequently coexist and may interact with cognition and contextual factors to influence second and foreign language learning (Shao et al., 2020). In this regard, many recent studies have shown that FLE is a malleable construct that is highly subject to both learner-internal and learner-external variables, highlighting that the FLE levels and its effect are greatly context-dependent and that it may be influenced by the sociocultural, historical and political context (De Smet et al., 2018; Guo & Qiu, 2022). Thus, consistent with the social shift in SLA and the PP and PP 2.0 perspective, research trends are aiming to be more context-sensitive and complex by incorporating social and cultural variables, as well as studying LOTEs instead of focusing only in English, in order to obtain a better understanding of positive emotions across cultures and instructional contexts (Wang et al., 2021). Given that context and target language are important and can influence FLE levels, it is worth to take a detailed look at the Italian context and how German as a Foreign Language developed in Italy, the country with the longest tradition of teaching and learning German, and where the earliest resources for learning German originated (Glück, 2014).

In the first part of this chapter, we will try to contextualize the situation of German as a Foreign Language by providing a comprehensive introduction to the Italian educational system, and briefly exploring the past and current contributions of emotion research in Italy, along with a description of the general situation in the educational context within the current post-pandemic period. Then, the second part will focus on examining the historical, political and economic relevance and presence of the German language in Italy, in order to subsequently focus specifically on the instructional context and potential factors influencing the experience of students learning German as a foreign language in Italian universities.

3.1 An overview of the Italian Instructional Context

As Dan and Yuwei (2021) describe, in Italy, compulsory education is provided to students from the age of 6 to 16 and often begins when children are 6 years old. Italian students spend

5 years in primary school, and 8 years in secondary school, typically divided into 3 years of lower secondary school and 5 years of upper secondary school. These in turn can then be divided into the following three categories, which can be further broken down based on the specific subject matter covered: lyceum, technical institutes, and professional institutes. Lyceum offers various disciplines of study (humanities, sciences, languages, and arts) and usually provides theoretical studies to students who intend to continue their studies at university. On the other hand, technical institutes include theoretical knowledge and professional experience in the fields of economics, management, tourism, science, and technology in a five-year program, along with a 3-6 month internship. Finally, professional institutes, which are created for particular fields of study (engineering, agriculture, gastronomy, technological assistance, handicrafts), have the objective of training students and teaching them skills that would enable them to obtain an employment. The average length of instruction is 3 years, although it can extend to 5 years. The National Ministry of Education and University Studies of Italy sets the foreign language education policies for each stage, whereas the post-compulsory professional education is typically decided on by each Region (Dan & Yuwei, 2021).

Although no explicit policy has been developed, the National Guidelines for the Curriculum (*Indicazioni Nazionali per il Curricolo*) released with the Decree 254/2012 of the Italian Ministry of Education contains recommendations to use the multilingual environment of the children so that they can receive appropriate instruction, become familiar with a variety of foreign languages, and benefit from developing foreign language education from the level of kindergarten (Dan & Yuwei, 2021). The teaching of a second EU language, in addition to English, is available at the primary level of education in Italy, but it is not actually mandatory according to the Guidelines until the lower secondary level, so it is obvious that the multilingualism project of the European Union has had a long-lasting impact on Italian foreign language education policy (Dan & Yuwei, 2021).

The almost complete supremacy of the English language in Italian foreign language instruction persists, however Italy is still actively pursuing pertinent policies and attempting to improve pupils' multilingualism. The proportion of pupils studying two foreign languages at the lower secondary level is the greatest among the three educational levels (primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary) in terms of the efficacy of multilingual education. Later, Italian high school graduates must pass the national exam (also known as *the L'esame di Stato*

or *L'esame di maturità*), besides passing the related foreign language competence examination, before they may enroll in a university (Dan & Yuwei, 2021).

3.1.1 Positive emotions research in foreign language education in Italy

In Italy, the interest in emotions was born around 1994 along with the first theory to focus on emotionality, namely, the ‘humanistic-affective’ approach; although emotions were frequently only conceptualized as affectivity, which is actually only one of the aspects of emotionality (Balboni, 2013). Thus, as reported by Balboni (2013), many Italian scholars began to investigate this area, and research gave attention to topics such as emotional component in literary instruction, the cognition/emotion dichotomy in interaction, the idea of “emotional competence”, emotions and visuality, and the function of emotional intelligence in language acquisition. However, according to Balboni (2013), the two main Italian scholars who have thoroughly researched this field in the Italian context are Mario Cardona and Fabio Caon: the first focused on studies about how emotion plays a part in memory; while Caon worked methodically on the enjoyment of language acquisition since 2006, connecting it to elements such as music and sports, and also researched how intense emotional attention might facilitate learning. Thus, it can be observed that, although the Italian language teaching tradition had mostly had a tendency to lean towards theoretical or applied linguistic aspects, there were also already a circle, although small, that paid attention to emotional elements and, even better, to positive emotions of language learning.

In the current period, as Menegale (2022) states, among the several positive emotions, the one associated with the enjoyment of learning a foreign language is the positive emotion that has received the most attention internationally, while in Italy there has been a very recent interest in enjoyment, some of this attention has been directed to the well-being of teachers who teach languages other than English. Reflecting this interest, one of the most recent studies on positive emotions under a PP approach in the Italian context is that of Proietti Ergün e Dewaele (2021) with 174 Italian L2 teachers participants in Italy and abroad. The study looked into the relationship between well-being and resilience, as well as a third emotional factor: Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment (FLTE). Carrying out these studies in the Italian context represents a very relevant contribution, since it also responds to the

request for additional research on positive emotions and the foreign language enjoyment construct in LOTEs.

In line with these thoughts, another interesting emotion research study in the Italian context is the one from MacIntyre & Vincze (2017), who decided to investigate within a German-as-a-foreign-language context in Italy the topic of the relationship of three well-known models of L2 motivation (Gardner's integrative motive, Clément's social-contextual model, and Dörnyei's L2 self-system) and their interactions with emotions. Respondents were from Italian secondary schools, where German was taught as a foreign language, and most participants were from families where only Italian was spoken at home. They discussed their reasons for wanting to study German and how they felt about doing so in South Tyrol, a part of Italy where the German and Italian language interact often due to historical reasons (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). As a result, in this context they identified 10 positive emotions including "joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love," and 9 negative emotions including "anger, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, guilt, hate, sadness, feeling scared and being stressed" (Dewaele & Li, 2020).

Finally, as one might imagine, the perception of well-being was put to a rigorous test during the COVID-19 situation in these last years, particularly in the organizational and educational context, where its nature and consequences have been extensively studied by educational research, revealing its characteristics, constraints, and points of strength (Menegale, 2022). Focusing more specifically in the current period, however, to the best of the author's knowledge, there are no research results regarding positive emotions in foreign language learning within the so-called post-pandemic "almost" return to normality in Italy, probably because it is still a very recent emergent phase.

3.1.2 Current learning environment in the post-pandemic period

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered globally the rapid switch from "in person" face-to-face instruction to online instruction beginning in early 2020; thus, face-to-face meetings were prohibited, and quarantine and lockdowns were implemented to try to stop the virus' spread. Such circumstances gave birth to Emergency remote teaching (ERT), a term used to describe a new and distinctive teaching setting, which is characterized as a temporary shift of

instructional delivery method to an alternate delivery method due to a crisis condition (Q. Wang & Jiang, 2022). ERT differs from planned online courses in the amount of time needed to perform the educational activity, as well as the special challenge that it represents for both the teacher and the student. Accordingly, Wang and Jiang (2022) reported that several studies have explored learner emotions, both positive and negative, during the COVID-19 epidemic in an ERT setting in order to uncover the underlying impacts of the abrupt shift in instructional venues.

More specifically, foreign language teaching at university was not immune to the challenges of transitioning to online education, and professors had to reposition themselves in an environment that did not previously exist in their job especially at the start of the lockdown, since they had limited time to restructure courses, adapt resources or develop engaging approaches to ensure language acquisition and establish a positive teaching and learning environment (Maican & Cocoradă, 2021). In Italy, the pandemic accelerated digitalization in the country's educational sector at an extraordinary pace, so nearly all academic activities were able to continue because the government decreed on March 2, 2020 that all teaching activities at all levels of education would be guaranteed within the lockdown, thus universities chose to implement a synchronously compatible system: this demonstrated their preference for genuine contact with their students despite the distance, while also partially addressing inclusion issues (Bakare et al., 2022).

However, following the termination of the state of emergency declared by Decree Law DL 24/2022, all teaching and curricular activities at university started to take place in presence for all students, teaching and non-teaching staff, suppliers, and visitors, allowing for classroom face-to-face lessons (Ministero della Salute, 2022). According to the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI, 2021), this was decided because they felt a significant obligation to return to face-to-face teaching in the classroom and to offer physical classrooms, libraries, and labs to students. Nonetheless, this decision was received with mixed feelings by Italian students, whose return to face-to-face classes was slow around May 2022; in fact, many decided to continue with distance education for as long as possible due to difficulties such as the cost of rent or lack of available housing in the university city, lack of time because they already had a job, difficulty moving due to the distance as some live in the south of Italy and have to move to the north for studies, little motivation or difficulty getting used to face-to-face classes once again, among others (Zunino & Monaco, 2022).

Finally, it can be said that the type and degree of each country responses varied between European Union member states, with Italy being the only country that prioritised investing in areas other than digital skills for teacher training; however, it is still too early to determine the depth of the ongoing transformations in the educational sector at the current time (Zancajo et al., 2022).

3.2 Relevance of German as a Foreign Language in Italy

The German language is one of 15 Germanic languages that comprise the Indo-Germanic linguistic family, and approximately 130 million people in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Liechtenstein, and South Tyrol (Italy) speak German as their first or second language (Bischoff et al., 2015). As these authors report, it is the most often spoken mother tongue in the EU and one of the top ten most spoken languages in the world, since around 15,4 million individuals are studying German as a foreign language, although others estimate that this number is actually even higher. This is due to a strong economy, which makes the language very attractive and serves as the foundation for an active language dissemination policy by means of funded German language courses in Germany and abroad, the provision of scholarships, and undergraduate and graduate program opportunities for international students (Bischoff et al., 2015).

According to statistics from the Italian research agency's 2019 study on foreign language learning in Italian high schools, English learners continue to account for the greatest percentage of foreign language students at 99.6%, with French coming in second at 16.2%, Spanish coming in third at 14.8%, while German comes in fourth position with 9.9% (Dan & Yuwei, 2021). This contradicting situation may be attributed to many Italian families' preconceived image of German as a “difficult” or “harsh” language, leading them to choose other “easier” and “friendlier” languages for their children (such as Spanish), which results less students attending German courses in secondary school, since many pupils continue to study the languages they have previously begun (Moraldo, 2017; Tabaglio, 2011).

In this sense, this situation represents a stark contrast against the relevance of German in business, education, and culture, since Germany is Italy's first business partner: mastery of the language in key industries such as tourism, technology, and economics adds value to the

curriculum in a variety of professional domains (Moraldo, 2017). This awareness has lately resulted in an increased demand of German language courses in Italian universities from around 2012, since many consider the mastery of German as necessary for successfully obtaining a job in times of economic instability (Ricci Garotti, 2015). However, it can still be said that there has always been and continues to be a strong interest in German for both political and geographical reasons in locations near German-speaking nations, evident in how German language in schools is now concentrated in Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto, and Lombardy (Hoffmann, 2013).

As previously stated, the relevance of German for Italy has many reasons. Historically, it began in the thirteenth century when German merchants were required to live and store their goods in the German Foundation (*Fondaco dei Tedeschi*) in Venice (Glück, 2014). As a result, they were of fundamental importance for the Venetian economy because they were already the top country with whom Italy had foreign commercial affairs; likewise, links to Italy remained of central importance for German trading cities, and also because of the proximity of both countries (Bruzzone, 2010). Given these circumstances, according to Bruzzone (2010), it is not unexpected that the first evidence of teaching German as a foreign language for business came from Venice. As a result, German as a foreign language retained importance in northern Italy.

On the other hand, being a major language, German has piqued the curiosity of many researchers. According to Hoffmann (2013), empirical studies on German as a FL in Italy started since the early 2000s, and frequently using qualitative approaches, sometimes coupled with quantitative methods. However, she also stresses the fact that, in contrast to German-speaking nations, Italy has a tendency to focus more on hard linguistics and not so much in the processes of learning German; thus, the interest in German as a FL is more centred on the linguistic level, that is, the product of learning the foreign language. However, within the context of German language teaching and learning in Italy, unexpectedly made an early call for an increased focus on the exploration of positive emotions because they were considered useful for learning and mental processes, in particular the positive emotion known as enjoyment (Hoffmann, 2013). Thus, anybody learning a language agrees that enjoyment has a positive impact on the learning process, which enhances focus and self-awareness (Hoffmann, 2013). As can be seen, there was already a potential nascent interest in positive emotions at

this time, and more specifically in enjoyment associated with German as a foreign language in Italy.

3.2.1 German language learning in Italian universities

The manuscripts of George of Nuremberg are without a doubt among the first and most notable examples of teaching German as a foreign language in Romance-speaking countries (Glück, 2014). George of Nuremberg taught German to young Venetians who wanted to work as interpreters and intermediaries in business negotiations with German merchants in fifteenth-century Venice, and it is believed that other similar schools existed on the Italian territory (Bruzzone, 2010). However, from an institutional point of view, the acquisition of foreign languages in Italy has been defined by the primacy of French, followed by English, and then by German in secondary schools, and later a more focused linguistic interest reached university instruction (San Vicente, 2019).

In terms of German studies at university, according to San Vicente (2019), the significant philological attention to the history of the language does not provide an equal relevant bibliography for the history of German language teaching in Italian institutions. According to a data reported by Dan and Yuwei (2021), the level of second language competence at the completion of undergraduate studies is much lower when compared to the language competence in English: 88% of the sample chose French, Spanish, or German as their second foreign language, with 89% of students having an A1/A2 level, and 11% having a B1/B2 level. However, foreign language education is less common in postgraduate courses than in undergraduate education, since only 39% of students study a second foreign language, and only 11% take a mandatory second foreign language (Dan & Yuwei, 2021). Certainly, there are many elements that influence this situation, and motivation and interest are unquestionably important factors: many studies demonstrate that, whereas learning English appears to be basically mandatory, the choice of learning German as a FL is taking after careful consideration, and it also seems more linked to the students' emotional aspects and a particular interest for German (Hoffmann, 2013).

When we look more closely at the circumstances surrounding the German language learning experience of students, it can be observed that most of the time students have already

developed strategic, cognitive, and metacognitive methods while learning English, their first foreign language, that may be exploited later while learning another foreign language, namely, German (Hoffmann, 2013). In this way, as Hoffman (2013) argues, students who begin studying German already have a plethora of fundamental skills and some experience with strategies, and learning styles, further supported by the fact that the linguistic systems of English and German have some similar features, such as a lexicon, although there are also significant distinctions in the morphosyntactic, phonetic, and phonological areas. Furthermore, for Italian native speakers, since German is very different from their L1, there seems to be linguistic transfers from their L2 into their L3 in some areas if the student possess good knowledge of the L2, namely, the English language (Hoffmann, 2013). As can be seen, Italian students learning German have various facilitating or motivating factors at their disposal, as well as challenges due to linguistic distance during their German learning experience.

Finally, as it was mentioned before, German language learning in general in Italy has been focused on the Northern part of the country, with Venice as a key territory. As one of the most important universities in the German as a FL language field in this area, Ca' Foscari University of Venice has been concerned about the issue of language learning, and in 2012 launched a project for the overall reform of language learning based on data from a previous survey to determine the situation in Italy at the university level in accordance with the linguistic standards set by European universities (Daloiso, 2014). One of the most notable conclusions was that the overall sample stated that they were satisfied with the language instruction received: two-thirds of the informants expressed a positive opinion on the subject. This information is critical because it sheds light on university language learners' opinions and subjective perceptions of their own foreign language learning experience within the framework of an Italian institution. This, once again, stresses the relevance of emotion research, and particularly that of investigating positive emotions in L2 and FL learning.

PART II

Chapter IV: The present study

As previously mentioned, the effects and interactions of positive emotions of students during foreign language learning is still an under-researched field compared to other areas of language education. The present study explored Foreign Language Learning Enjoyment (FLE) and its dimensions from a Positive Psychology perspective in university students in northeast Italy who were learning German as a foreign language as part of their curriculum or in other university classes within the context of a hybrid learning environment due to the prevailing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This chapter is divided in five sections. In the first one, we will introduce and define the aims and meaning of this study and the three research questions that the research seeks to investigate and answer. Then, a description of the sample and context, as well as a detailed account and summary of their socio-demographic characteristics will be provided. Subsequently, the method and the instruments used during the research in order to manage and collect data will be illustrated. Finally, the last section will provide an accurate description of the process as a whole and will also focus on providing a detailed account of the procedures carried out in each phase of this research's execution.

4.1 Research aims

The aim of this study is to investigate and obtain a better understanding of the foreign language FLE situation, FLE levels and FLE profiles of university students in Italy learning German as a foreign language, explore the possibility of a significant effect of other internal and external variables related to the students' learning experience, as well as to identify the sources and key points that form part of particularly strong FLE episodes from students' own accounts.

Most previous research has focused on the Asian or American context and almost exclusively on English as a foreign language, while the risks of drawing generalizations based on a single language have also been highlighted (Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). Additionally, there is also strong evidence to suspect that socio-cultural, and historical-political factors and the foreign language itself also play a role in shaping learners' emotional experiences, as observed by De Smet et al. (2018). Finally, as described in the previous

chapter, studies focused on the emotions of foreign language learners in Italy have not been very abundant, which justifies shedding light on the Italian university context and on the German language.

To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first empirical study to investigate the construct of FLE among university learners of German as a Foreign Language in the Italian post-pandemic setting. The motivation for this study stems from the demand for more research on LOTEs and other cultural contexts made by De Smet et al.'s (2018) and Proietti Ergün and Dewaele's (2021). Accordingly, from the perspectives of positive psychology, the present study aimed to investigate and answer the three following research questions:

- ✚ RQ 1: Do the students experience FLE in their German language classes? If so, what is the students' overall current level of FLE and what is the general FLE profile?
- ✚ RQ 2: Does age, gender, multilingualism, FL mastery, type of major (majors on German language, other majors), and class delivery method (remote, hybrid or face-to-face) have a significant effect on the overall FLE levels?
- ✚ RQ 3: What is identified most frequently by the students as sources and key aspects of particularly strong or memorable previous FLE experiences?

4.2 Participants and setting

The participants in this study were a total of 81 undergraduate and graduate students from different courses of study that were learning German as a foreign language in universities located in three important cities of northeast Italy: Venice, Bologna, and Padua. The sample was obtained by convenience sampling. The majority of the data was collected through snowball sampling by contacting German language professors and students from the Linguistics departments at Ca' Foscari University and the rest by self-selection sampling on Whatsapp and Facebook online student groups from University of Bologna and University of Padua, since participants needed to meet the requirements of being students learning German as a foreign language at a university located in northeast Italy.

There were 71 females and 10 males, so the vast majority of the sample was female (87.7%), with ages ranging from 18 to more than 30 years old, although most participants were in the 18-21 age group. The participants reported 8 different nationalities, the largest nationality group was Italian ($n=74$), followed by other nationalities such as Chinese ($n=2$), Albanian ($n=2$), Romanian ($n=1$), Moldavian ($n=1$), and Laos ($n=1$) that were grouped under the category 'Other'. All participants were formally studying either at Bachelor's ($n=68$) or Master's level ($n=13$) at three prestigious universities in northeast Italy: Ca' Foscari University of Venice ($n=41$), University of Bologna ($n=30$), and University of Padua ($n=10$), where 63 of them were pursuing a major where German language was a core, compulsory subject, while 18 of participants were following majors in other areas not specifically focused on the German language.

Although all participants were studying German as a foreign language at the time of the study, they had different language backgrounds and German proficiency levels. When asked about their multilingualism, participants declared overall that they were able to communicate from 2 languages up until 6 languages, with the largest number of participants being able to communicate in 4 languages ($n=38$). Not surprisingly, almost all participants reported speaking Italian ($n=79$), either as mother tongue or as a foreign language, while all participants without exception spoke English as an FL ($n=81$), followed by German ($n=73$)¹, Spanish ($n=25$), and French ($n=25$). Less spoken languages included Russian ($n=13$), Chinese ($n=5$), Japanese ($n=3$), Romanian ($n=1$), Albanian ($n=2$), Finnish ($n=1$), Arabic ($n=1$), Slovak ($n=1$), Moldavian ($n=1$), and two Italian dialects: Venetian ($n=1$) and Friulian ($n=1$). Also, participants declared varied German language proficiency levels ranging from Beginner (A1) to Advanced User (C1), the largest group being Intermediate (B1) with 26 participants. No participant declared a Fluent (C2) level. Finally, regarding the class delivery method, most participants reported that they were attending their German language classes face-to-face ($n=68$), followed by hybrid classes ($n=8$), and fully online classes ($n=5$). This is in line with the current situation in the Italian instructional context at university due to the prevailing effects of the 'post-pandemic' phase. A more detailed account of socio-demographical data of the study's participants can be seen in Table 1.

¹ Despite being German language learners, when asked "Which languages do you know? Please specify the languages in which you are able to communicate", participants who reported an A1 German level on the German proficiency level question did not declare German in this section, presumably because they felt they could not yet communicate with a limited level of German.

Table 1. Socio-demographical information of participants ($n=81$)

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	71	87.7 %
	Male	10	12.3 %
Age group	18-21	58	71.6 %
	22-25	20	24.7 %
	30+	3	3.7 %
Nationality	Italian	74	91.4 %
	Other	7	8.6 %
Education level	Bachelor's	68	84 %
	Master's	13	16 %
University	Ca' Foscari University	41	50.6 %
	University of Bologna	30	37.0 %
	University of Padua	10	12.3 %
Number of languages known	2 languages	3	3.7 %
	3 languages	20	24.7 %
	4 languages	38	46.9 %
	5+ languages	20	24.7 %
German language proficiency	Beginner (A1)	9	11.1 %
	Basic User (A2)	12	14.8 %
	Intermediate (B1)	26	32.1 %
	Upper Intermediate (B2)	23	28.4 %
	Advanced User (C1)	11	13.6 %
Major	German language	63	77.8 %
	Other	18	22.2 %
Class delivery method	Face-to-face classes	68	84 %
	Hybrid classes	8	9.9 %
	Online classes	5	6.2 %

4.3 Method

The study followed a mixed method research with quantitative data and also qualitative data in order to triangulate the results. The value of mixed methods research in applied linguistics arises from the fact that it gives researchers a variety of study options, allowing them to integrate the best of both worlds and study a subject both from a quantitative and qualitative approach (Dörnyei, 2007). More specifically, a sequential explanatory design was chosen, which is a design type divided into two phases: a researcher first collects and analyses quantitative (numeric) data in order to obtain a general grasp of the study subject, and then qualitative (text) data are collected and analysed subsequently in order to explain the quantitative data from the first phase, delve deeper into the participants perspectives and explain the quantitative results (Ivankova et al., 2006).

In this research study, quantitative data was collected by means of an web-based online questionnaire. Subsequently, qualitative data was collected by means of an optional open question at the end of the questionnaire and online individual semi-structured interviews with 5 participants who previously filled the questionnaire. On the other hand, the independent variables in the present study were as follows: participants' gender, age, multilingualism, FL mastery, type of major, and class delivery method, whereas the main dependent variable measured was the students' foreign language enjoyment while learning German as a foreign language.

4.4 Instruments

The main instruments of the study were a web-based questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. In the first phase, the participants of the study were asked to voluntarily fill an online questionnaire designed in the Google Forms platform. Before formally starting, the welcome page showed a brief explanation of the general aim of the research and asked the participant's permission for the treatment of personal data. Then, the participants were asked about their sociodemographic information, such as gender, age, nationality, education level, the university where they were studying, number of languages known, German level proficiency, type of major, and the modality of class delivery. All questions were formulated

in English, but participants were assured that they could also answer in Italian at any given time if they so preferred.

Then, participants were asked to respond to the Short Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale in the next part of the questionnaire. Initially, the tool to measure the multidimensional FLE was the 21-item Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES) developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), which has many adaptations and translations (Botes et al., 2021). However, this initial version proved to be too long when compared with, for example, the 8-item Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), so Dewaele et al. (2018) created a 10-item short scale, and it was subsequently shortened by Botes et al. (2021) as the S-FLES, reporting high reliability ($\alpha = .81$) and also high internal consistency. This scale was used to measure the degree of German Foreign Language Enjoyment of the sample. The questions were linked with the social sphere of FLE (e.g. “We form a tight group”), the appreciation of the teacher (e.g., “The teacher is encouraging”) and with enjoyment related from the personal perspective (e.g. “I enjoy my German language classes”). There are 9 items on the scale and all of them are phrased positively. The responses are given as a standard 5-point Likert scale (from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’). The distribution of the items corresponding to each FLE dimension is illustrated in Figure 5.

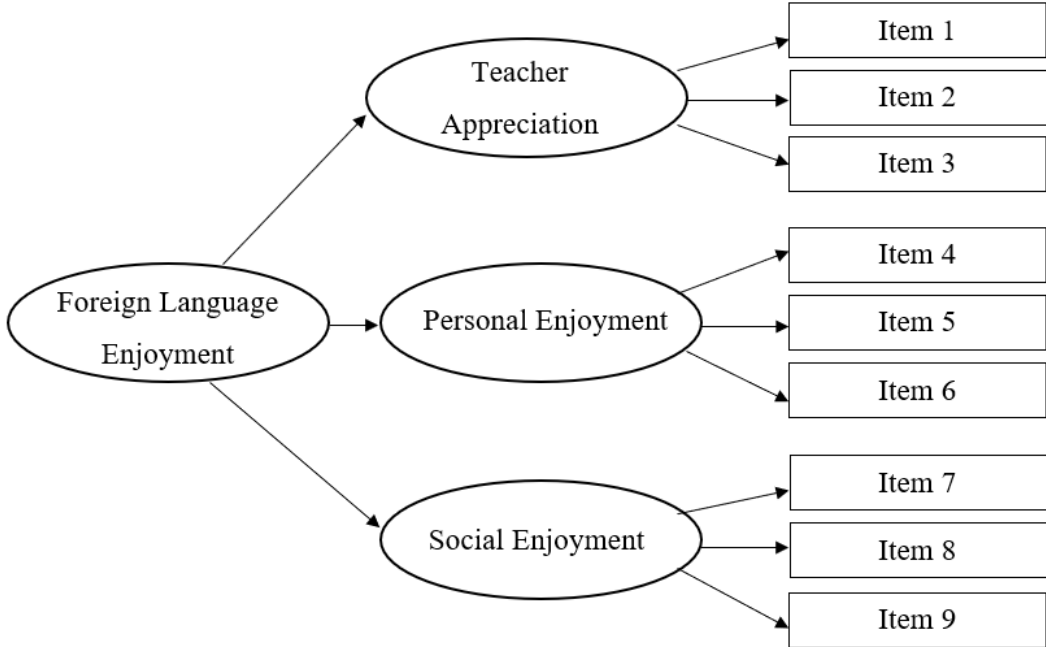


Figure 5. Illustration of item distribution according to each FLE dimension identified by the S-FLES (adapted from Botes et al. (2021)).

Following Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) and Li et al.'s (2018) approach, this study decided to include an optional open question at the end of the questionnaire asking students to provide a detailed description of any enjoyable episodes or event (if any) during their German language classes that they remembered. Once again, participants were encouraged to answer either in English or Italian, and to choose the language they felt most comfortable with. Finally, the questionnaire included a final extra, non-numbered question asking them if they would be interested in participating in the next phase of the study and to confirm or reject if they would be willing to be contacted for the subsequent semi-structured interview.

For the second phase, the study used semi-structured interviews with a maximum duration of 20 minutes by means of the Gmeet Google application. The interview was offered in English or Italian at the participant's choice and included a flexible design of 8 questions. The first two questions briefly explored participants' relationship and attitude towards the German language. The next two questions asked the participants to reflect on previous FLE episodes and identify the potential sources (e.g., "Have you ever experienced a situation that you particularly enjoyed, made you feel good or that made you feel a sense of achievement during your German classes?" and "What do you think were the main sources or main factors that made this specific experience to be enjoyable?"). Finally, the remaining questions were aimed to potentially obtain additional general information related to the FLE dimensions, namely, the teacher, the peers, and the social environment in class; as well as to identify suggestions and ideas from the students on how they thought their German classes could be more enjoyable. However, this structure was flexible and the researcher added, omitted or changed some questions according to each particular case.

4.5 Procedure

As the first step, the online questionnaire was created and then continuously modified according to the research's needs. It was decided to design the questionnaire entirely in English and not in Italian, since FLE is still an under-researched construct in regards to LOTEs and, to the best of the researcher's knowledge at the time, there was no S-FLES Italian translation and most literature on this topic used only English terminology with no widely-accepted or recognized equivalents in Italian. Additionally, the author of this study,

although proficient in Italian, is not a native speaker of this language; hence, it was decided to avoid risks and maintain the questionnaire in English, while also considering that students at Italian universities possess at least an intermediate English level, which was deemed to be more than enough to understand and complete the questionnaire. However, it was decided to allow and encourage answers in Italian to any of the questionnaire items, since this would not impede the researcher's understanding of the data and could potentially increase the response rate. The questionnaire was then published and shared from October 2022 until December 2022. The researcher contacted German language professors at Ca' Foscari University by the institutional email, shared the questionnaire through social media among the researcher's peers and other German language students and also contacted by email the CLA centre at this university. The questionnaire was also shared among Whatsapp and Facebook groups from German courses at the University of Bologna and University of Padua. All participants were informed verbally or in written form about the aims and details of the research. In this way, 88 responses to the questionnaire were collected.

For the next phase, around the first week of December 2022, the researcher extended invitations to all the participants who had demonstrated interest in participating in the interview. Since the aim of the semi-structured interviews was the identification of FLE sources, candidates with no anomalies in their questionnaire responses and who had answered positively to at least four items of the scale were prioritized. A week before the interview appointment, the researcher sent personalized emails to all participants providing a detailed explanation of the interview. All participants signed a consent form that allowed the recording, transcription and use of their personal data for research purposes before the interview. In this way, online audio-only interviews with 5 participants through Gmeet were conducted until the third week of December 2022.

Then, during the subsequent cleaning and manipulation of the quantitative data in Microsoft Excel, 7 answers to the questionnaire had to be dismissed and were not included in the study for various reasons: 1 respondent did not belong to a university in northeast Italy, 1 questionnaire was incomplete, 1 questionnaire stressed a strong, seemingly illogical hate discourse towards the German language in the open question, and other 4 responses showed contradicting answers to the S-FLES items or it could be inferred that the questionnaire had not been taken seriously. Due to the risk of these anomalous responses provoking a bias or representing outliers in the data analysis (Dörnyei, 2007), they were excluded from the data

set, leaving 81 valid questionnaires for further analysis. After this, the researcher coded all socio-demographic and S-FLES answers to numbers (quantitative data) according to standard coding practices, and imported the cleaned data in the Excel sheet to the SPSS 29.0 program.

As the first step for the data analysis, it was decided to use standard descriptive and inferential statistics to answer to the two first research questions. In order to assess if this was feasible, a scale reliability test and normality test of the sample were carried out. After obtaining acceptable results, the researcher used descriptive statistics of frequency on the sociodemographic data to better understand the sample. Also, descriptive statistics such as means, medians, range, and standard deviations were used in order to obtain the overall FLE level of the sample and the overall FLE levels for each dimension of the S-FLES. On the other hand, a series of independent samples T-tests and one-way ANOVAs were executed in order to show the differences in the mean scores of the groups under observation and answer the second research question, namely, to determine if the independent variables under study had a significant effect on the FLE levels observed.

As the final stage of the study, the researcher transcribed all the interviews recordings into clean text, that is, without verbatims, background sounds, pauses, or repetitive words. The recordings were listened to and read multiple times in order to ascertain the accuracy of the transcription and to become increasingly familiarized with the content. Once this was completed, the researcher carried out an initial identification of potential thematic categories before starting the coding process for the thematic analysis. The Microsoft Word files of the 5 interview transcriptions, along with the file containing the 29 textual answers given to the open question of the questionnaire, were imported to the Nvivo 20.7 software and the potential FLE sources were identified and coded in thematic categories following Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) and Wang and Jiang's (2022) approach. Finally, all data analysis results were summarized and interpreted.

Chapter V: Data analysis and results

In order to pursue the aim of this study, which is to investigate the foreign language FLE situation of university students in Italy learning German as a foreign language, three research questions were formulated in order to specifically explore FLE levels and profiles, the possibility of a significant effect of internal and external variables related to the students' learning experience, and identify the sources of particularly memorable FLE episodes from students' accounts. To this end, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and carefully analysed.

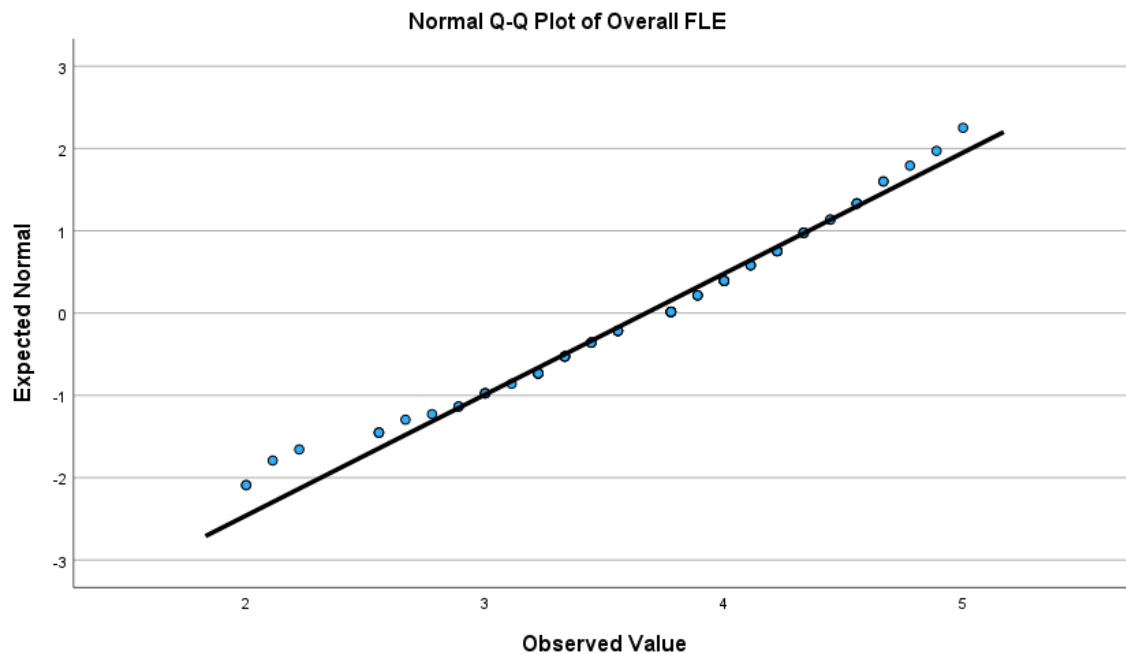
This chapter is divided in two sections, namely, quantitative and qualitative results. In the first section, we will present the results of the quantitative data analysis applied to answer to the first and second research questions, starting from reliability and normality test of the sample, and subsequently proceeding to descriptive and inferential statistics to investigate FLE levels and the effect of independent variables. The second section will be focused on the thematic analysis results of the qualitative data collected in order to answer the third research question by identifying the key thematic categories and their frequencies, as well as highlighting students' voices and providing main examples extracted from the interview and open question data.

5.1 Quantitative data:

After an initial general assessment of the sample's characteristics and demographics (which was presented in the previous chapter), it was decided to conduct a scale reliability test and normality test in order to gain a better understanding of the data and decide on appropriate statistics methods according to the research questions to be answered. Thus, the scale's reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a value of 0.88 for the 9 items in this study. This indicates a suitable, high reliability, and is also very similar to the reliability value reported by Botes et al. (2021) for the S-FLES. In fact, the wording of two items was adapted to better suit the study ("I enjoy it" to "I enjoy my German language class", and "We have common legends, such as running jokes" to "There is a good atmosphere"), which could explain the slight difference.

Subsequently, since the sample size was not as large as in other FLE studies, a standard normality test was performed in SPSS on the FLE data. Hence, a Shapiro-Wilk test was executed and it suggested that the null hypothesis could not be rejected and that data could be assumed to be normal ($df=81$, $p\text{-value}=0.113$). Based on this result, the symmetry of the QQ plot was also visually examined and deemed to be fairly symmetrical except for some curves at the lower and up ends. The normality distribution is graphically represented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Normal Q-Q Plot showing the normality distribution of the data.



As Dörnyei (2007) explains, formal normality tests are only part of the picture and it is also useful to determine the symmetrical degree of the data, since the distribution may impact statistical analysis in a small sample. These issues, however, are mitigated when the sample size is large (or close to 100 participants). In this case, the sample size did not reach 100 participants, but it was larger than 50, and the test results gave reason to believe that it had a fair degree of normality. Thus, it was decided that it allowed parametric tests for the data analysis required by the second research question.

5.1.1 General FLE level

The initial part of the first research question aimed to determine if the participants experienced FLE in their German language classes and, if this was confirmed, to subsequently identify the overall current level of FLE. In order to do this, descriptive statistics were administered to the quantitative data. The average scores of the 5-point scale items were calculated in order to obtain the mean, minimum and maximum value, range, median and standard deviation. From what could be observed, the mean for the overall FLE level of the sample ($n=81$) was 3.67, with scores ranging from 2.0 to 5.0, indicating a range of 3 between them. The results also showed that the median was 3.77 and the standard deviation was calculated at 0.68. **Table 2** below summarizes these results.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the overall FLE level ($N=81$)

Variable	Mean	Min	Max	Range	Median	SD
Overall FLE	3.67	2.0	5.0	3.0	3.77	.68

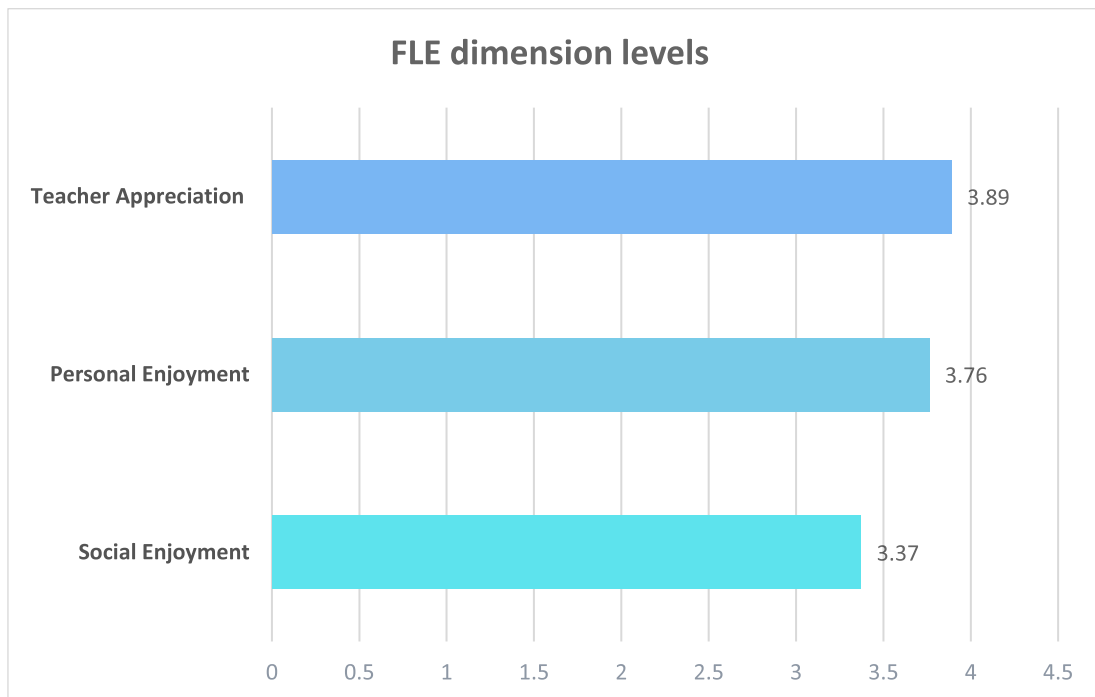
What emerges from the findings stated above is that, according to Dewaele and McIntyre (2014), if the mean score is above 3.50, then it means that participants enjoy learning the foreign language. Based on the results, it can be said that participants of this study do experience enjoyment in their German language classes, although seemingly at a moderate level. The median, that is, the middle value of the data set, was also close to the mean. The highest average score obtained by participants was 5, which is also the full score obtainable by the scale, while the lowest score was 2. On the other hand, the low standard deviation value suggests that the data is not highly dispersed and could be seen as reliable.

5.1.2 FLE levels on the three S-FLES dimensions

Once the overall FLE level of the sample was determined, the second part of the first research question aimed to subsequently identify the overall current level of each FLE dimension experienced by the participants in order to further understand the FLE profile of the sample. As mentioned before, each subscale comprises three items. Thus, the results from each corresponding item were grouped according to their subscale and the overall mean scores were calculated for each dimension.

In this way, the findings revealed that the highest score belonged to the category of Teacher Appreciation ($M=3.89$, $Min=1.33$, $Max=5.0$, $range=3.67$, $SD=0.88$), followed by Personal Enjoyment ($M=3.76$, $Min=1.67$, $Max=5.0$, $range=3.33$, $SD=0.67$), and Social Enjoyment ($M=3.37$, $Min=1.33$, $Max=5.0$, $range=3.67$, $SD=0.81$). A visual representation that better illustrates the FLE dimension levels according to their mean values is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Overall FLE levels according to each FLE dimension ($N=81$)



At a first glance, what could be observed from the data is that participants do show evidence of experiencing Teacher Appreciation and Personal Enjoyment, since these scores

are above the established 3.50 minimum score for FLE evidence. In fact, both dimensions do not seem very far from each other. In contrast, the results for Social Enjoyment are below the 3.50 threshold value ($M=3.37$), which would suggest low enjoyment from their social environment. Beside this, the Teacher Appreciation and the Social Enjoyment dimensions exhibit the same minimum and maximum values, as well as the range value. On the other hand, the standards deviation for all FLE dimensions were low, which indicates low data dispersion.

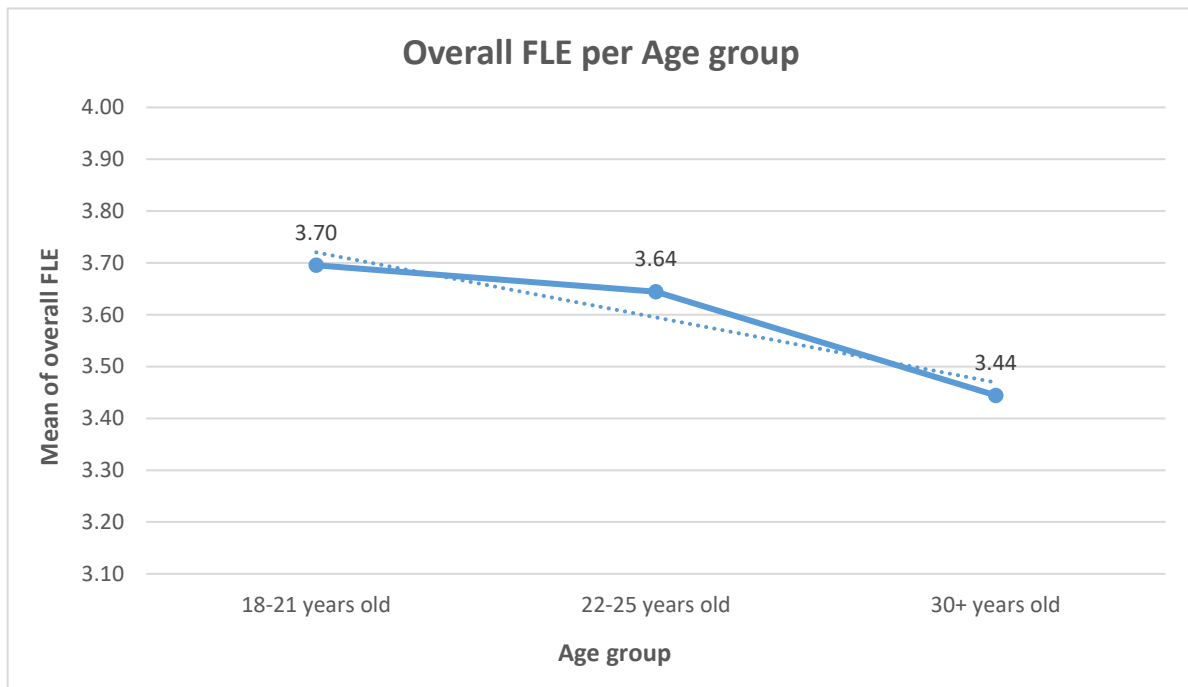
5.1.3 Sociodemographic variables and FLE

The second research question was focused on discovering whether the independent variables of age, gender, multilingualism (number of languages known), the level of mastery of the German language, the type of major (namely, students majoring on German language in contrast against students from other majors where German is not compulsory), and the class delivery method (ranging from face-to-face, hybrid, and remote classes) have a significant effect on the FLE levels observed. In order to obtain an answer, descriptive and inferential statistics were used in this part of the analysis.

5.1.3.1 Age

For the purposes of this study, participants' age was divided in the following categories: 18-21, 22-25, and 30+ years old. An initial analysis revealed that the largest age group, that is, the 18-21 years old group, exhibited the highest overall FLE value ($N=58$, $M=3.69$, $SD=0.60$), followed by the 22-25 years old group ($N=20$, $M=3.64$, $SD=0.91$), and the 30+ years old group ($N=3$, $M=3.44$, $SD=0.29$), who was the only group below the 3.5 score threshold. Figure 8 gives a graphical representation of the overall FLE level for each age group.

Figure 8. Line graph illustrating the overall FLE level for each age group ($N=81$)



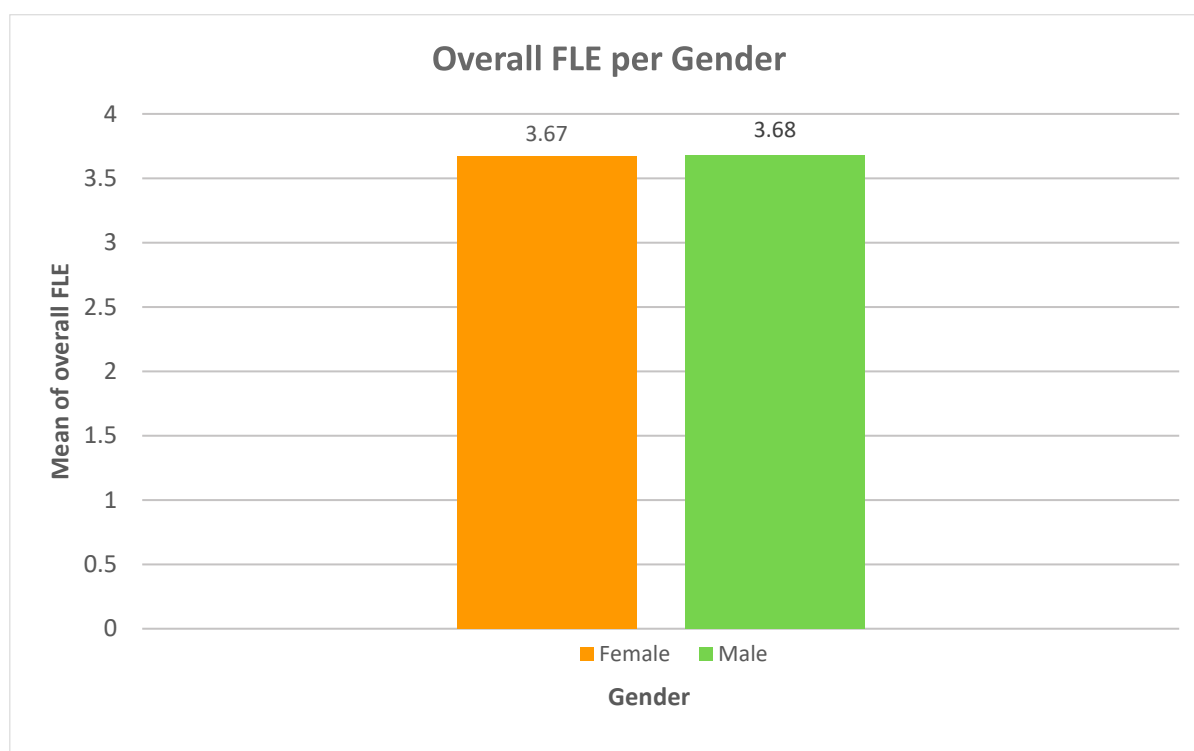
In order to determine if there was a significant difference between the groups, a one-way ANOVA was performed. The results revealed that the null hypothesis of equality could not be rejected, thus suggesting that there was no significant difference between the groups (p -value=0.80). However, the test of homogeneity of variances reported that the groups were not homogeneous (p -value=0.023). Hence, in this case it was decided to use a non-parametric test in order to confirm the results. The Kruskal-Wallis test was performed (p -value=0.634), and confirmed that there was no significant difference.

Furthermore, the levels of the three FLE dimensions were also calculated in order to see if it was possible to observe any difference between the groups. Teacher Appreciation: 18-21 years old ($M=3.90$), 22-25 years old ($M=3.87$), 30+ years old ($M=3.89$); Personal Enjoyment: 18-21 years old ($M=3.80$), 22-25 years old ($M=3.67$), 30+ years old ($M=3.67$); Social Enjoyment: 18-21 years old ($M=3.39$), 22-25 years old ($M=3.40$), 30+ years old ($M=2.78$). A series of one-way ANOVA yielded no statistical significant results ($p=0.992$, $p=0.736$, $p=0.441$, respectively).

5.1.3.2 Gender

In order to evaluate the gender variable, participants' gender was divided between male and female. The descriptive analysis revealed that more than two thirds of the participants were female students ($N=71$), while the rest were male participants ($N=10$). In this case, the descriptive analysis showed that both females ($M=3.67$, $SD=0.68$) and males ($M=3.68$, $SD=0.64$) had almost identical levels of overall FLE. According to the mean scores, it can be said that both group experience FLE. Figure 9 offers a graphic representation.

Figure 9. Bar graph illustrating the overall FLE level for each gender group ($N=81$)



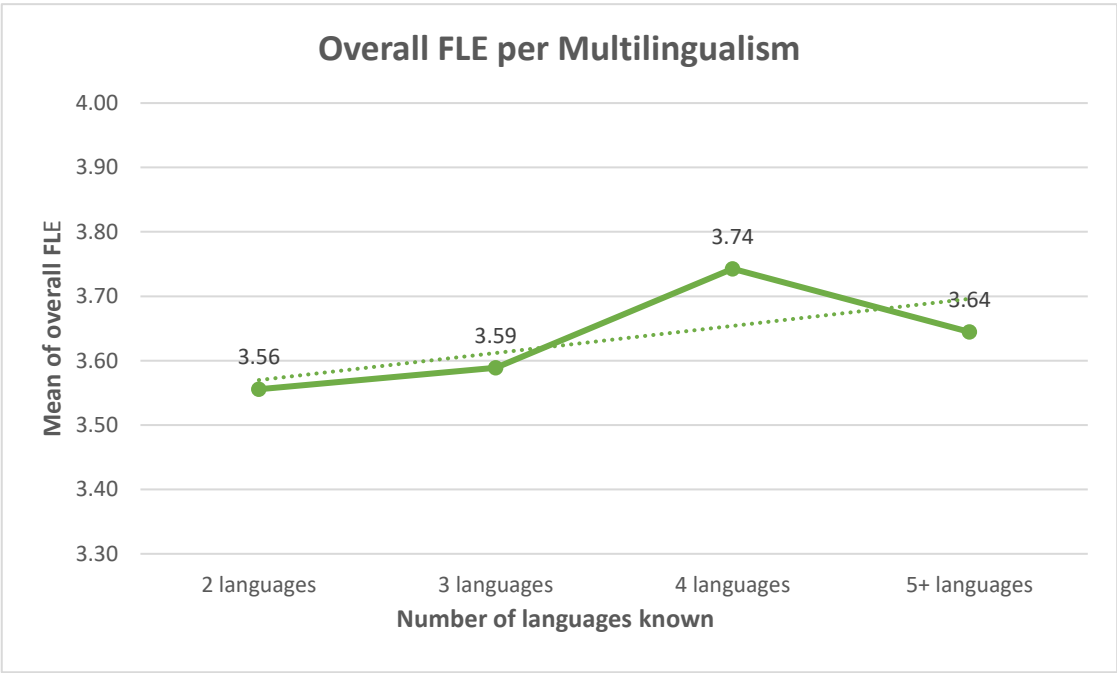
In order to confirm if there was a significant effect of gender on the overall FLE levels or not, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the data of this variable. The results confirmed that there was no significant difference to be observed ($df=79$, p -value=0.98) between the FLE levels of the male group and those of the female group. Moreover, the levels of the three FLE dimensions were also calculated. Teacher Appreciation: female ($M=3.89$), male ($M=4.07$); Personal Enjoyment: female ($M=3.79$), male ($M=3.57$); Social Enjoyment:

female ($M=3.37$), male ($M=3.40$). A series of independent t-tests yielded no statistical significant results ($p=0.170$, $p=0.153$, $p=0.120$, respectively).

5.1.3.3 Multilingualism

Regarding the multilingualism variable, after a descriptive statistics analysis, the self-reported data showed that the sample was comprised of 3 bilinguals (3.7%), 20 trilinguals (24.7%), 38 quadrilinguals (46.9%), and the remaining 20 students reported knowing five or more languages (24.7%). In this case, the mean scores of all categories were very similar between each other, but they will still be reported in an orderly fashion from the highest value to the lowest: participants who spoke 4 languages ($M=3.74$, $SD=0.67$), followed by participants who spoke 5+ languages ($M=3.64$, $SD=0.82$), participants who spoke 3 languages ($M=3.59$, $SD=0.57$), and lastly, participants who spoke 2 languages ($M=3.56$, $SD=0.69$). In this analysis, the mean FLE scores of all groups confirmed that they experienced FLE. A linear representation is given in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Line graph illustrating the overall FLE level according to multilingualism ($N=81$)



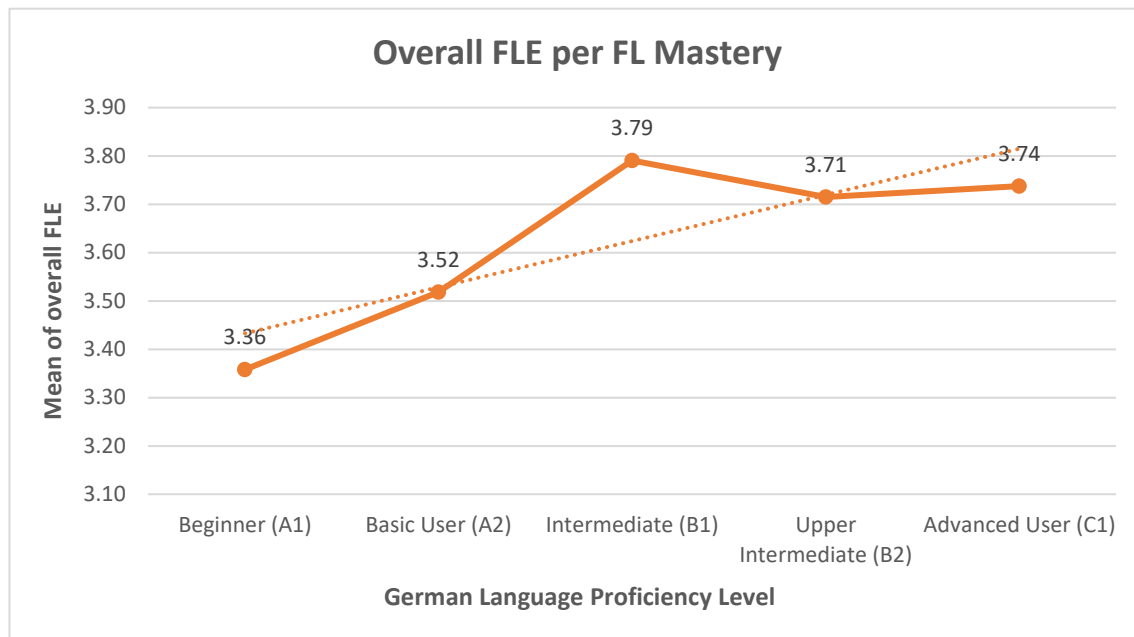
For the verification of a significant effect of multilingualism level on FLE, the one-way ANOVA test revealed that there was no significant difference found between the groups in this sample (p -value=0.848). Still, a visual examination of the linear graphic may suggest that there is an upward FLE trend with more languages spoken, since the trilingual group and pentalinguals+ group are of the same size, yet the participants who spoke 5+ languages exhibit a slightly higher mean FLE score ($M=3.64$) than the trilingual group ($M=3.59$).

Subsequently, the levels of the three FLE dimensions were also calculated in order to see if it was possible to observe any difference between the groups. Teacher Appreciation: bilinguals ($M=4.00$), trilinguals ($M=3.53$), quadrilinguals ($M=4.11$), pentalinguals+ ($M=3.82$); Personal Enjoyment: bilinguals ($M=3.78$), trilinguals ($M=3.73$), quadrilinguals ($M=3.78$), pentalinguals+ ($M=3.75$); Social Enjoyment: bilinguals ($M=2.89$), trilinguals ($M=3.50$), quadrilinguals ($M=3.34$), pentalinguals+ ($M=3.37$). A series of one-way ANOVA yielded no statistical significant results ($p=0.129$, $p=0.995$, $p=664$, respectively). Given the general upward trend observed, Pearson correlation coefficient tests were performed on the overall FLE and also the three FLE dimensions, but no significant result was obtained.

5.1.3.4 FL mastery

As for the FL mastery variable, participants were divided in the following categories according to their German language proficiency level: Beginner – A1 ($N=9$, $M=3.36$, $SD=0.72$); Basic User – A2 ($N=12$, $M=3.52$, $SD=0.58$); Intermediate – B1 ($N=26$, $M=3.79$, $SD=0.65$); Upper Intermediate – B2 ($N=23$, $M=3.71$, $SD=0.75$); Advanced User – C1 ($N=11$, $M=3.74$, $SD=0.69$). It can be seen that most participants were in the intermediate (B1) and upper intermediate (B2) levels, and also the highest mean FLE scores were concentrated on the higher proficiency level groups. In contrast, the Beginner group did not pass the 3.5 FLE score threshold, whereas the Basic User (A2) group barely achieved that value. For the remaining three groups, it can be said that they experienced FLE during their German language learning. The graphic representation of the data is provided on Figure 11.

Figure 11. Line graph of overall FLE level according to German proficiency level ($N=81$)



In order to see if the German language proficiency had a significant effect on the FLE level, the one-way ANOVA test revealed that there was no significant difference found between the groups in this sample (p -value=0.485). Nevertheless, the graph seems to suggest a stable mean FLE level for the three higher proficiency levels (B1-C1), with an upward trend for higher FLE along with higher levels of the FL proficiency.

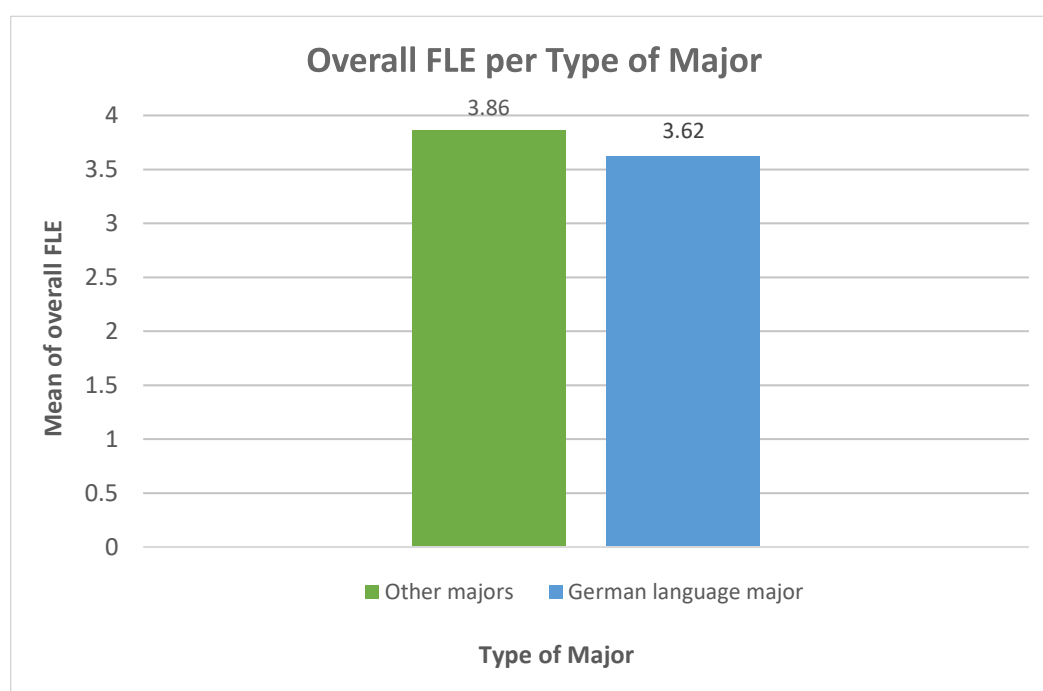
Then, the levels of the three FLE dimensions were also calculated in order to see if it was possible to observe any difference between the groups. Teacher Appreciation: Beginner A1 ($M=3.37$), Basic user A2 ($M=4.00$), Intermediate B1 ($M=4.04$), Upper intermediate B2 ($M=3.90$), Advanced user C1 ($M=3.82$); Personal Enjoyment: Beginner A1 ($M=3.70$), Basic user A2 ($M=3.47$), Intermediate B1 ($M=3.90$), Upper intermediate B2 ($M=3.77$), Advanced user C1 ($M=3.79$); Social Enjoyment: Beginner A1 ($M=3.00$), Basic user A2 ($M=3.08$), Intermediate B1 ($M=3.44$), Upper intermediate B2 ($M=3.48$), Advanced user C1 ($M=3.61$). A series of one-way ANOVA yielded no statistical significant results ($p=0.404$, $p=0.515$, $p=303$, respectively).

In this case, given the pronounced general upward trend observed, Pearson correlation coefficient tests were performed on the overall FLE and also the three FLE dimensions. The results revealed only a positive significant correlation for Social Enjoyment and German language proficiency of 0.231 with a p -value of 0.038.

5.1.3.5 Type of major

For the next variable, namely, the type of major, participants were divided in two groups. The first one were the students who pursued a major in German language ($N=63$), which means that German language classes were a core, mandatory subject for them; this was also the largest group (77.8%). The remaining participants were included in the other group, comprised of students of other majors ($N=18$), meaning that German classes were chosen as an elective within or outside their study plans or selected from another programs; in any case, German language was not a compulsory course for them. Here, the highest FLE score was obtained by participants of other majors ($M=3.86$, $SD=0.68$), followed by German language majors ($M=3.62$, $SD=0.68$). Both groups experienced FLE. Figure 12 illustrates the results.

Figure 12. Bar graph of overall FLE level according to type of major ($N=81$)



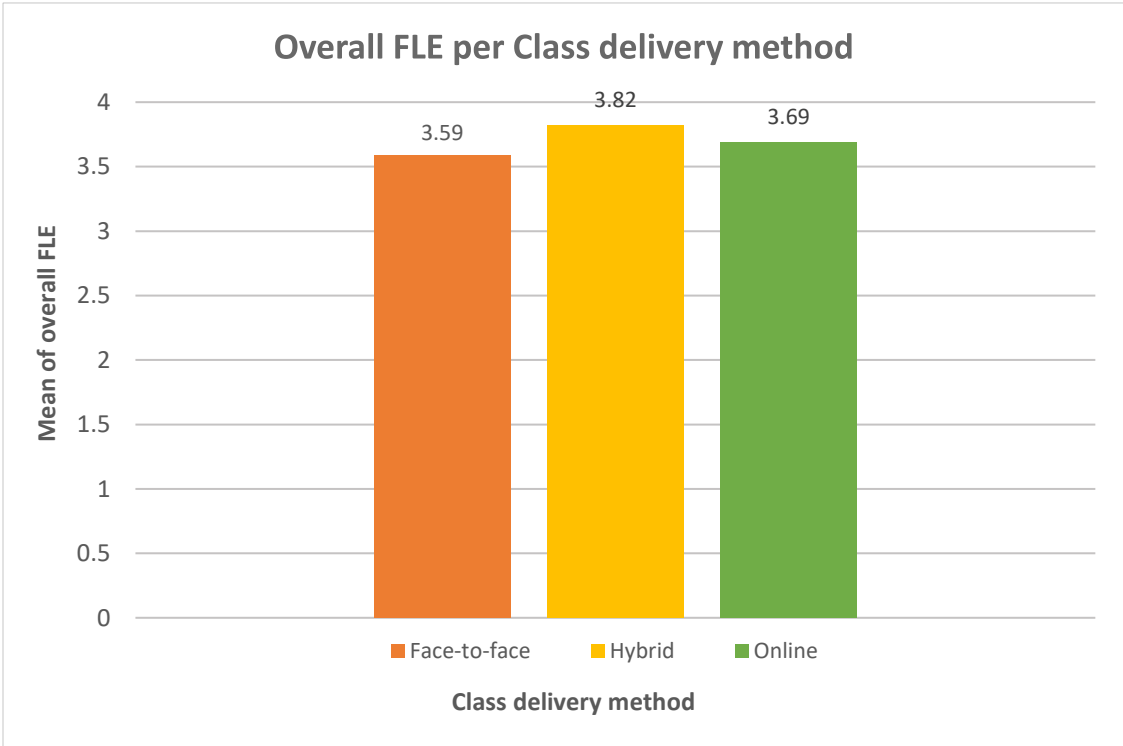
For this variable, in order to confirm if there was a significant effect of the type of major on the overall FLE levels or not, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the data. The results confirmed that there was no significant difference to be observed ($df=79$, p -value=0.928) between the FLE levels of the group specializing in German language and those specializing in other majors. Moreover, the levels of the three FLE dimensions were also calculated. Teacher Appreciation: other majors ($M=4.13$), German majors ($M=3.82$); Personal

Enjoyment: other majors ($M=3.91$), German majors ($M=3.72$); Social Enjoyment: other majors ($M=3.54$), German majors ($M=3.32$). A series of independent t-tests yielded no statistical significant results ($p=0.884$, $p=0.282$, $p=0.655$, respectively).

5.1.3.6 Class delivery method

Concerning the class delivery method, after a descriptive statistics analysis, the self-reported data showed that more than 80% of the sample was comprised of students who were attending face-to-face classes ($N=68$). The remaining students followed classes that were sometimes face-to-face and sometimes online ($N=8$), and those in fully online classes ($N=5$). The mean scores of all categories were not far from each other. The highest FLE score was obtained by the hybrid classes group ($M=3.82$, $SD=0.59$), followed by the online classes group ($M=3.69$, $SD=0.68$), and lastly students from face-to-face classes ($M=3.59$, $SD=0.57$). The FLE scores of all groups confirmed that they experienced FLE. A representation is given in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Bar graph of overall FLE level as per class delivery method ($N=81$)



In order to see if the class delivery method had a significant effect on the FLE level, a one-way ANOVA test revealed that there was no significant difference found between the

face-to-face, hybrid and online classes groups in this sample (p -value=0.814). Furthermore, the levels of the three FLE dimensions were also calculated. Teacher Appreciation: face-to-face ($M=3.85$), hybrid ($M=4.21$), online ($M=3.93$); Personal Enjoyment: face-to-face ($M=3.78$), hybrid ($M=3.54$), online ($M=3.80$); Social Enjoyment: face-to-face ($M=3.33$), hybrid ($M=3.71$), online ($M=3.33$). A series of one-way ANOVA yielded no statistical significant results ($p=0.557$, $p=0.632$, $p=0.469$, respectively).

5.2 Qualitative data

The analyses above let us explore learners' FLE from a quantitative perspective; however, the results did not reveal any statistically significant effect caused by the independent variables of age, gender, multilingualism, German language mastery, type of major, and class delivery method. Nevertheless, it was necessary to continue the analysis get a deeper and more global understanding of the student's language learning experience, so qualitative data was needed in order to identify potential external or internal sources of FLE. In this sense, the third research question aimed to determine which kind of factors the learners identified as sources or key aspects of FLE episodes in relation to their German language classes.

To this end, qualitative data were collected at two moments: the first data were collected from the open question at the end of the web-based questionnaire, which directly asked the participants if there was any moment that they enjoyed during their German language classes and, if yes, to describe it as in detail as possible. Since answering this open question was optional, only 29 participants shared a personal FLE account out of the 88 initial responses to the questionnaire, producing a total of 1278 words. Also, 23 answers were written in English and the remaining 6 were written in Italian. The average length of the contributions was 44.06 words.

The second phase consisted of qualitative data collection by means of the semi-structured interviews. In this case, the interviews were conducted with 5 participants, who were selected and invited for this subsequent phase. The interviews had a maximum duration of 20 minutes and featured 8 questions about the identification of enjoyable moments in class, a reflection by the participants on the possible causes, and at the end participants were also asked briefly about their learning environment and to provide some suggestions about

potential sources of enjoyment. The 5 interviews lasted between 9 minutes and 19 minutes, and the interview transcriptions produced a total of 7627 words. All the interviewees were female: 2 were students at Ca' Foscari University, 2 attended classes at University of Bologna, and the last student was enrolled at University of Padua. Additionally, only one student was studying at master's level, the remaining 4 students were studying a bachelor's degree. All 5 interviews were fully conducted in Italian at the participants' choice.

Since the purpose of the third research question was to identify and explore as many potential sources of FLE as possible, the qualitative data obtained from both the open question and the interviews was analysed together.

5.2.1 Thematic content analysis for FLE sources

In order to analyse textual data, the qualitative research method chosen was thematic content analysis. As Dörnyei (2007) explains, this type of qualitative research method involves several phases: transcribing the audio data into textual form, data cleaning, followed by a very general coding of data into themes after close reading and familiarization with the data, searching for patterns, and making interpretations. Thus, this method relies on the researcher's interpretation and inductive identification of the qualitative categories from the data inspected (Dörnyei, 2007). In this case, this study followed the coding approach used by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014, 2016), and the many FLE-related episodes and accounts were first coded into main themes, which were then subsequently linked and coded into the three FLE dimensions considered in this research: Teacher Appreciation, Personal Enjoyment, and Social Enjoyment. Hence, the findings were examined in connection with the aforementioned categories.

As a first step, it is useful to consider and examine the data as a whole from a global perspective in order to obtain a general impression. The responses received in the open question revealed that participants, when asked about their foreign language enjoyment in class, actually perceived and understood a vast range of different concepts as "enjoyable episodes". Some participants opted to answer in a straightforward manner and describe particular events that they remembered, exactly like the question asked, but others described a pattern of events over a period of time, or their opinions of their overall experience rather than

giving a detailed account of the episode itself, and some even cited episodes or moments that occurred outside of the FL classroom context. This phenomenon was also observed to some extent in the responses of interview participants.

If examined more closely, it can be seen that in general participants' comments of enjoyable episodes frequently contained details about the teacher, specific activities in the German language class, or their own personal accomplishments with the German language. Some stories were about personal great achievements in the classroom, either because they were struck by a sudden awareness of their progress and developed abilities, or because the teacher publicly recognized the participant's good performance, or because the participant's peers expressed appreciation for the performance through compliments. Other episodes dealt with instances of positive feelings associated with the atmosphere in the classroom, a general sense of lack of performance pressure during class, and a peer-to-peer support connection.

All of these thematic areas show connections to and are consistent with the three FLE dimensions from the S-FLES. Interestingly, there were also some accounts of students reporting the FL itself, namely, the German language and its particular characteristics, as a key aspect from which they derived joy in class. Furthermore, respondents made associations by themselves between enjoyment and other positive emotions such as pride, fulfilment, happiness, gratification, and self-confidence by mentioning them in their accounts, as well as other constructs such as motivation and performance. Due to these reasons, the exact thematic coding of the accounts also represented a difficulty, since slight or potential overlaps could be detected in many narratives when the participant reported an event with several actors and where the FLE source was vague, for example, in the case of enjoyment derived from public recognition with the teacher and peers present. In view of these circumstances, the researcher decided to take into account the possibility of participants deriving enjoyment from multiple sources at a given moment, so the same extract could be coded under more than one thematic code if the particular case so suggested. Regarding the temporal and contextual focus, as mentioned before, the accounts included moments that lasted for a few minutes, for the duration of an activity, for the whole class hours, for a whole semester or year, or even for longer periods of time. Also, the vast majority of the episodes took place within the classroom and during the German language class hours, but there were some participants who reported experiences outside the classroom and abroad when using the language for real life, practical purposes.

Given the nature of the research question, both the data from the open question and the data from the interviews were considered together, and 82 instances or extracts concerning FLE were identified. These episodes were coded and assigned in themes, and further classified according to the corresponding FLE dimension. The categories, main themes for each category, and frequency of mentions are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Sources of FLE according to three categories and frequency of mentions by participants

Category	Examples	Frequency of mentions
FLE-Teacher	Teacher's qualities: encouraging teacher (12), teacher's friendly attitude towards students (7), teacher's praise and recognition (5), supportive teacher (2), teacher's interest in students' preferences (4)	44
	Specific classroom activities: interesting lesson topic (11), games, role plays, fun activities (3)	
FLE-Personal	Personal positive performance: Pride in language performance (13), realisation of progress in FL mastery (12), positive results in exam/homework assessment (2)	42
	Personal interests: authentic use of the FL (6), appreciation for the FL (6), challenging learning activities (3)	

FLE-Social	Positive relationship with peers (6), relaxed atmosphere in the classroom (4), supportive peers (2), peer recognition (3)	15
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From the information given in the table, it can be seen that the 82 episodes were classified in one of the following main themes: Teacher’s qualities, Specific classroom activities, Personal positive performance, Personal interests, and Positive relationship with peers; and these in turn were assigned to each FLE dimension. As it can be observed, the participants in this study reported that their FLE episodes were most frequently related to their German language teacher. The FLE linked with the Teacher had the higher number of mentions, including themes both related to the qualities that students appreciated in the teacher and to specific classroom activities created or executed by the teacher for the German language class. The second category, that encompassed sources related to the personal sphere of the students, was not that far behind with 42 mentions, just a difference of two with the previous category. In this section, students mostly pointed out to events linked with their personal positive performance in class or that they derived enjoyment from aspects related to their personal interests. Finally, the least frequent source of FLE mentioned by participants was FLE related to their social environment, which mostly encompassed their positive relationship with their peers; however, this category had a low frequency of mentions and was farther behind the two previous categories. In general, a minimum of 4 general FLE sources were identified per category (FLE-Social), whereas the category with the most FLE sources was the category related to the teacher with 7 thematic sources. For the purposes of this analysis, it also important to look more closely at the specific accounts and extracts identified in the participants’ reports.

5.2.2 FLE sources identified by participants

Due to space and time constraints, the aim of this section is not to fully report the responses to the open question or the whole interview data (for complete transcriptions, see **Appendix C** and **D**). Thus, it was decided to present only selected data extracts that were most typical or

representative of the category. The excerpts will seek to provide the context of the participant's learning experience and the many facets of each theme resulting from the unique convergence of internal and external aspects. Also, responses that were given in Italian are cited in the original language, and translations made by the researcher are offered next to them.

- **FLE-Teacher:**

One participant from the interviews, when asked for an enjoyable episode, commented on how she mainly remembered the teacher's kind attitude and how she encouraged them to speak and make mistakes, both activities that some adult learners may initially not be very keen to do in a foreign language class. She felt that the teacher managed to promote positive emotions in the students, they felt encouraged to try even when they felt unsure or did not know the answer. She particularly appreciated that the teacher gave them support in their language learning:

“La mia professoressa all'università è molto, molto gentile e incoraggia molto i suoi studenti a parlare e a sbagliare soprattutto. In quella classe eravamo tutti molto calmi e soprattutto grazie alla professoressa che, come ho detto prima, era molto incoraggiante e anche se magari volevi dire una parola, però non ti veniva, lei cercava di darti una parola simile, così magari tu ci arrivavi e riuscivi ad arrivare alla risposta da solo e non dandoti direttamente la risposta.” [My professor at university is very, very kind and fully encourages her students to speak up and, above all, to make mistakes. We were all very relaxed in that class, mainly thanks to the teacher who, as I said before, was very encouraging, and if you wanted to say a word but it didn't come to you, she tried to give you a similar word, so that maybe you could get the answer by yourself and not by giving you the answer directly.]

Another participant, such as the participant who declared the following extract, directly reported the teacher as the reason they enjoyed their German language classes as a

whole during a long period of time. This participant also highlighted the teacher's support and appreciated the creation of a comfortable space for oral participation:

“I was very lucky to have one of the best German language teachers in my second and third year of University. She was very supportive and always made us feel comfortable when talking in German during lesson, I really appreciated her.”

Other participants also pointed to the teacher's friendly attitude towards the students as the element that made them feel comfortable and that enabled them to enjoy their language lessons. They particularly appreciated the teacher's high approachable attitude towards them, and the lack of pressure or fear of judgement that may come with interacting with a distant, respectable figure, since a university professor is seen as such in Italian academic culture. Here is the account from one student during a group activity in class:

“Quindi c'era lei che passava ascoltando, si fermava, ma comunque non era un modo inquisitorio, era molto tranquillo, poi se c'erano dubbi potevamo chiederle, ci sentivamo proprio a nostro agio come se fosse l'amico a cui chiedi: 'cavolo, non mi ricordo la parola, tu la ricordi?'. E quindi è proprio questo rapporto molto di vicinanza con la prof, non come 'oh mio Dio, devo chiedere ad una persona che sicuro, poi chissà che cosa penserà di me, perché non ricordo le parole o come dire questa cosa'.”
[She passed by us and listened, she sometimes stopped, but it wasn't an inquisitive way, it was very relaxed, if there were any doubts we could ask her, we felt really at ease as if she were a friend you ask: 'hey, I don't remember this word, do you remember it?'. It was precisely this kind of very close relationship with the teacher, not like 'oh my God, I have to ask a person that who knows what they'll think about me because I don't remember the words or how to say this'.]

Maybe due to the fact that the teacher is a respectable and knowledgably figure that students have as a role model, obtaining recognition or praise from the teacher for their performance is an event that greatly boosts learners' enjoyment, as well as satisfaction, pride and other positive emotions. Even just perceiving a positive emotional expression or response from the teacher is interpreted by the student and this generated positive emotions:

“In another case, we were looking at texts of an assignment that we corrected after getting a feedback from the teacher. The teacher was happy with the way we all had corrected our own mistakes by ourselves, which made me feel satisfied about my work.”

Some participants also reported specifically that the teacher’s interest in their own preferences was a source of enjoyment for them. They report feeling good because the teacher showed a genuine interest in them as a person and was keen on maintaining a reciprocal, continuous dialogue. When asked to reflect on why she thought she had enjoyed her German lessons during the semester, this participant stated the following:

Sicuramente il fatto che fossero interattive, quindi che la prof tenesse in considerazione i nostri interessi, le lezioni erano fatte su misura per noi. Lei si preoccupava di cosa piacesse a noi e quindi poi lo metteva in atto. Se li avessimo proposto qualcosa di diverso, le lezioni sarebbero state tutt'altre. [Surely the fact that they were interactive, that the teacher took our interests into consideration, the lessons were tailor-made for us. She cared about what we liked and then put it into action. If we had asked for something different, then the lessons would have been completely different.]

Accounts from students also show that they frequently enjoy the classroom activities itself, particularly in the case of an interesting lesson topic, fun activities created by the teacher or the use of gamification by means of web-based technologies. A participant from the interviews reported, while laughing, that she had fun when her teacher made specific lessons related to the German culture. She especially liked the teacher’s creativity to create engaging and fun lessons, even during online teaching and with limited resources:

A me piacevano in particolare delle lezioni tematiche che avevamo. Una in particolare, una lezione di Natale, c'eravamo connessi su zoom perché c'era ancora il Covid e avevamo tutti lo sfondo della videochiamata, uno sfondo natalizio e avevamo parlato per tutta la lezione del Natale in Germania, com'è diverso dal Natale in Italia e tutto il lessico.

[I especially liked the thematic lessons. One in particular, a Christmas lesson, we were connected on Zoom because of Covid and we all had a background in the video call, a Christmas background and we talked about Christmas in Germany for the whole lesson, how different it is from Christmas in Italy and all the vocabulary.]

- **FLE-Personal:**

Pride for FL performance was the theme with the highest frequency of mentions, so it can be said that many learners assigned great value to what they felt was an outstanding performance or the reaching of a milestone during their German language classes. This generated positive emotions deriving from their own language learning ability, and this usually was triggered by a classroom activity. Some typical answers from students include the following:

“During the first written exam simulation I used only a German-German dictionary, and I felt no need of using any German-Italian/Italian-German dictionary. That made me feel proud of what I'm doing and how I am working. It made me realize that I'm improving more than what I used to think.”

A good portion of responders also recounted a moment when they were unexpectedly struck by the awareness of how far they had advanced and how their work and effort was actually bearing fruit. This realization was generally personal and within the private sphere, although like in the case of pride from FL performance, it seems to also be usually initiated by a classroom activity or caused by the teacher's guidance:

“We listened to a track where a group of German people were speaking in their own dialects about a interesting topic (environment and organisations that protect animals and landscapes). I feel a sense of achievement when I realised I was actually able to understand them because of the level I reached due to these classes.”

In the following case, it is evident that this realization is not always sudden and short, but that it can also slowly build up during the course. The student states that the teacher also

played an important role in their realization of progress, since the learners were actively guided to see their own advancements:

“During every German classes we talk about different topics. Every week I can see my little achievements in speaking. Also the teacher make us conscious of our achievements.”

Even though the authentic use of the FL was a frequent topic during the interviews, it was mainly mentioned to point out that students felt that there was a lack of authentic material during lessons and a more practical approach towards what they were learning was needed. Thus, not many instances of authentic use of German were mentioned, and the few reported occurred abroad:

“When I was in Munich for a school trip 3 years ago I could interact quite easily with the locals and my host family.”

Due to what was mentioned above, students strongly appreciated when they had the opportunity to use the language in an activity that could represent a real-life situation. Participants enjoyed such rare events because of the novelty, and also because it gave them a sense of purpose as to why they were learning the language in the first place:

“Non sentivi nemmeno il tempo passare, è passato velocissimo perché stai facendo qualcosa che è diverso dal solito e che ti invogliava anche perché poteva essere una reale situazione”. [I didn’t even feel the time go by, it went by very quickly because I was doing something different than usual and it motivated me because it could be a real-life situation.]

Interestingly, some students stated that they specifically derived enjoyment from learning the German language, that is, they had an deep interest and appreciation for this language for various reasons, such as how it sounded, because they liked Germany or the German culture, of positive lasting past experiences with the German language, or because it was different from other romance languages and represented a challenge in itself, that is, something very

significant at a personal level. These participants reported that they felt happy simply by using German or by being surrounded by German in their language class:

“Per me è l'averne l'occasione di parlare in tedesco perché ho sempre il desiderio di parlarlo, ma nessuno che mi capisce, ovviamente. Poter parlare con i miei compagni o con la mia professoressa mi rendeva felice, perché sicuramente non posso parlarlo con la mia famiglia però avere la possibilità proprio di riuscire a parlare in tedesco era la parte che mi piaceva di più dalla lezione.” [For me, it's having the opportunity to speak German because I always have the desire to speak it, but no one near who understands me of course. Being able to talk to my classmates or my teacher makes me happy, because I certainly can't speak it with my family, but having the possibility of being able to speak German was the part I liked the most from the lesson].

Besides the challenge that the German language represents in itself for many, some participants also mentioned that they liked challenging classroom activities in general, such as passing difficult exams or successfully giving a public presentation in front of the classroom. They linked these activities not only with enjoyment, but also with motivation and a sense of satisfaction.

“It's very motivating when you are asked to challenge yourself doing something as speaking in front of an audience and it's satisfactory when you recognise that you are able to do it. Even if you don't do that perfectly, using the language to communicate information is a step that makes you closer to that language.”

- **FLE-Social:**

This was the category with the least number of mentions both in the open question and the interviews. However, according to the participants, pupils still do enjoy learning a foreign language when the atmosphere in the classroom is pleasant. One of the most important aspects that contributes to this atmosphere is having a cordial relationship with peers or, at

least, have opportunities to establish conversations and interact with their fellow students in class using the foreign language:

“Se penso alla parte di lettorato, quindi di noi che usiamo la lingua, direi le conversazioni che c'erano ad ogni singola lezione fatte fra di noi compagni.” [If I think of the readership part, therefore of us who use the language, I would say the conversations that took place at every single lesson made between us comrades.]

On the other hand, some participants did not remember a particular enjoyable episode or event specifically, but they still felt in general that German class was an enjoyable experience due to the relaxed environment during the lessons. Other participants have also reported feeling an emotionally safe environment, potentially reducing FLA, as well as a sensation of camaraderie with their peers or possibly also with the teacher:

“La prima cosa che mi viene in mente, così di getto, era proprio il clima che c'era in classe. Proprio il clima sereno e rilassato. Non c'era ansia, non c'era pressione, non c'era questo senso di ‘sei sotto indagine, siamo qui a guardarti e giudicarti, segneremo tutto quello che dirai di sbagliato’. C’era un clima tranquillo, una conversazione come fra amici che parlano di qualcosa, però in un'altra lingua”. [The first thing that comes to mind is the atmosphere in the classroom. A serene and relaxed atmosphere. There was no anxiety, there was no pressure, there wasn't this feeling of 'you're under scrutiny, we're here to watch and judge you, we'll point to anything you say wrong'. There was a relaxed atmosphere, like a conversation between friends talking about something, but in another language.]

Some participants noted that receiving general appreciation and recognition in front and from their group of peers boosts their enjoyment and self-confidence. Activities such as speaking in front of peers and receiving praise for their performance leads to positive emotions even in individuals who generally try to avoid being the centre of attention:

“Sono anche una persona abbastanza timida che non parla tanto, però quando ricevevo complimenti per come mi esprimevo in tedesco, mi sentivo molto bene”. [I'm also a

very shy person who doesn't talk much, but when I receive compliments on how I express myself in German, it feels very nice.]

Finally, a participant shared that she appreciated the fact that she and her peers had a positive and amiable relationship based on mutual help and peer support, using each learners' strong points in order to improve the German language learning experience of everyone, advancing as a group:

“Anche perché ci potevamo aiutare fra di noi. Cioè non c'era quella competizione del ‘io voglio fare meglio di te’. C’era proprio un clima di ‘siamo tutti uguali, magari tu sei più bravo, magari mi dai una mano su questa parola che proprio non ricordo o come dire meglio questa frase che io direi troppo in maniera italiana rispetto alla versione tedesca’”. [Also because we could help each other. I mean, there wasn't this competition of 'I want to do better than you'. There was just a climate of 'we are all the same, maybe you're better at this, maybe you can give me a hand on this word that I really don't remember or on how to better form this sentence because I would use an Italian structure instead of a more natural German one.']

5.3 Overall results

The present research study aimed to provide an answer to three research inquiries in relation to the following: (1) determining their FLE levels and profiles of university students in Italy learning German as FL; (2) the possibility of a significant effect of internal and external variables related to the students' learning experience; and (3) identification of sources of particularly memorable FLE episodes from students' accounts.

For the first research question, the overall quantitative results confirmed that the participants of this sample experienced FLE. The dimension with the highest FLE score was Teacher Appreciation, followed by Personal Enjoyment. Social Enjoyment was in the last place and also did not surpass the FLE score threshold, so it cannot be said that participants experienced this FLE type. Regarding the second research question, the statistical procedures were unable to find a significant effect from variables such as age, gender, multilingualism, German language mastery, type of major, and class delivery method on the students' overall

FLE level. Finally, the sources and key aspects from memorable FLE episodes were reported by the participants. The themes related to the teacher (e.g., encouraging teacher, interesting lesson topic) comprised the category with the highest frequency of mentions, closely followed by the category focused on the personal sphere (e.g., pride in language performance, realisation of progress in FL mastery). The third category, related to the social environment, had the lowest number of mentions (e.g. positive relationship with peers, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom).

Chapter VI: Discussion of results

6.1 Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore foreign language learning enjoyment from a Positive Psychology perspective in university students learning German as a foreign language within the instructional context of northeast Italy during the current ‘post-pandemic’ period. To do so, the research addressed three questions focused on: (1) gaining a better knowledge of the FLE level of university students studying German in Italy; (2) the impact of learner-internal and learner-external variables on their FLE levels; and (3) identifying the causes and essential aspects of particularly meaningful FLE episodes. Accordingly, the study followed a mixed-methods approach by adopting a sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data was collected by means of a web-based questionnaire, and qualitative data was obtained through an open question in the questionnaire and five semi-structured interviews with participants. Subsequently, quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while thematic content analysis was applied to qualitative data.

The quantitative results for the first research question revealed that the participants in this sample experienced FLE during their German learning experience. Teacher Appreciation had the highest FLE score, followed by Personal Enjoyment, and Social Enjoyment. However, this last category did not exceed the FLE score criterion. Concerning the second research question, statistical results failed to uncover a significant effect of variables such as age, gender, multilingualism, FL mastery, major type, and class delivery method on students' FLE. In the subsequent phase, taking into account the answers to the open question and the reports from the interviews, it was revealed that the category with the highest frequency of mentions was FLE-Teacher (e.g., encouraging teacher, interesting lesson topic), followed closely by FLE-Personal (e.g., pride in language performance, realisation of progress in FL mastery). The third category, connected to FLE-Social, had the fewest references (e.g. positive relationship with peers, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom).

In view of the above, this final chapter is divided in the following sections: the first section will provide a detailed account and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative outcomes obtained in the previous chapter from the perspective of the three research questions, namely, each research question will be presented in an orderly manner and the

results will be discussed and interpreted by linking them to previous findings and in light with the current context. Then, the second section will focus on the limitations of this research by addressing design or methodology aspects that affected or influenced the study results. After that, the third section will consider the pedagogical implications of this study by looking at the potential of FLE, PP, and positive emotions to improved pedagogical practices and heightened emotional management in the foreign language classroom. Then, the last section will provide some suggestions and directions for future research in the field that arose during the general development of this research work and also during the analysis of the limitations of this study. Lastly, the conclusions will be the closing remarks for this research work.

6.1.1 Students' FLE profiles

The first research question aimed to investigate and obtain a better knowledge of the FLE situation and level of university students studying German in Italy. In order to answer this inquiry, the following specific research question was posed: "Do the students experience FLE in their German language classes? If so, what is the students' overall current level of FLE and what is the general FLE profile?". Regarding the first part of this research question, the statistical analyses showed a mean of 3.67 for the overall FLE level of the participants. Following Dewaele and McIntyre (2014), this study also considered the overall score threshold established by them, which stated that if an overall score surpassed 3.50, then it meant that the foreign language learners were experiencing FLE. Thus, not unexpectedly, it can be said that the results seem to confirm the first part of the research question and suggest that the sample comprised of students attending German language classes at Ca' Foscari University, University of Bologna, and University of Padua experienced FLE during their German language learning experience. Nevertheless, interpreting the degree to which the participants seem to be enjoying their German as a foreign language classes might prove to be a more difficult task.

From a purely quantitative point of view, no further guidelines have been provided by the creators of the FLES or S-FLES regarding the specific score ranges that may be considered as indicative of moderate or high foreign language enjoyment. Naturally, a full score of 5 may be considered as a really high FLE in the classroom, but the scores between

3.5 and 5.0 may not be so transparent. Due to the fact that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study aimed at investigating the level of enjoyment experienced by university students learning German as a foreign language in Italy, these results cannot be compared to any other previous studies in this context. The only other study related to FLE in Italian participants was the one carried out by Proietti Ergün and Dewaele (2021); however, it focused on the enjoyment that teachers feel when teaching Italian as a foreign language, that is, Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment (FLTE), which makes it unsuitable for comparison as it is another construct with its own measurement scale. For this reason, hereafter the results of the present study will be mainly contrasted with the results and score interpretations of other international previous FLE studies.

In this sense, the results from the present study are generally in line with those found in other studies in the field. The mean of 3.67 for overall FLE score found in this sample was higher than the overall scores found in some recent studies with Chinese samples (e.g., Fang & Tang, 2021; Li et al., 2018). Taking the study carried out by Fang and Tang (2021) with university students as an example, it can be observed that the results revealed an overall FLE score of 3.40, which was considered as indicative of a moderate FLE by the authors. On the other hand, the overall FLE score of this study was lower than those found in international or other country's samples in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), Kaplan (2022), Mierzwa (2019), Wang and Jiang (2022). In this cases, an overall FLE score close to 4 or more was considered as indicative that the students were experiencing high FLE, although most scores range from 3.7 to 4. Hence, in view of the above, the findings from the present study would suggest that the sample of university students learning German in northeast Italy experienced a moderate to high level of FLE. Also, the results are in line and within the range of most overall FLE scores from studies conducted in diverse contexts.

Regarding the second part of the research question, the findings revealed that the highest score belonged to the category of Teacher Appreciation with a mean FLE score of 3.89, followed by Personal Enjoyment with 3.76, and Social Enjoyment with 3.37. These results are in line with other previous studies, which usually also exhibit this line-up with respect to the FLE dimensions scores: the FLE related to the teacher occupies the first place with a high FLE score, followed by the FLE linked to the private sphere and, in the last place, the FLE associated to the atmosphere. This trend was replicated in Li et al. (2018); Wang and Jiang, (2022); Zhi and Liu (2021). Only in Fang and Tang (2021) did the FLE-Atmosphere

score surpassed the FLE-Private score; however, the FLE-Teacher was still the highest score. Similarly, in most of the studies reported above, the social sphere of FLE did not surpass the 3.5 score threshold, a trend that was also observed in this study.

As mentioned before, the moderately high levels of FLE of this study are not entirely unexpected. The sample was self-selected and a vast majority was comprised of participants majoring in the German language; thus, it can be assumed that these students already had a positive attitude and interest towards the German language. It could also be inferred that they potentially had previous enjoyable experiences with foreign language learning in general since they decided to choose it as a career path for their undergraduate or graduate education. This may explain the high levels of Personal Enjoyment, while the high levels for Teacher Appreciation would mean that most teachers were successful at making their students enjoy their classes, since usually the main contributor to learners' FLE is related to the teacher (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Another possible reason further contributing to this assumption may be the fact that these students specifically chose to study German in the northeast region of Italy, known for its historic and prestigious promotion of and high level in the German language, so it would be reasonable to think that a good portion of them are motivated or take their German learning seriously. On the other hand, the low levels of Social Enjoyment may arise from the class delivery style of universities itself, where the relationship with the teacher and peers may sometimes be perceived as more distant by students in university classrooms, as stated by CB's comments during her interview (see **Appendix D**).

In general, it can be observed that the FLE levels are not as high as those observed in other previous international studies, which would mean that there may be room for improvement regarding the FLE of students in this area. Also, the relatively small size of the sample when compared to other studies, as well as the low degree of homogeneity in the categories related to variables such as age and type of major, may influence these final results.

6.1.2 The effect of sociodemographic variables on students' FLE

The second research question aimed to investigate the possibility of a significant effect of learner-internal and learner-external independent variables related to the students' learning experience while learning German as a foreign language, namely, demographic, socio-

biographical and FL-related variables. In order to answer this inquiry, the following specific research question was posed: “Does age, gender, multilingualism, FL mastery, type of major (majors on German language, other majors), and class delivery method (remote, hybrid or face-to-face) have a significant effect on the overall FLE levels?”. The series of statistical descriptive and inferential analyses revealed that, in general, the participants who had already mastered several languages, who had reached a higher level in German, who attended hybrid classes, who were from other majors, and who were younger reported slightly more FLE than their peers in the other categories, although none of these variables showed a statistical significant effect on the FLE levels. In general, these results partially match those obtained by Mierzwa (2019) in her study with English Philology university students, where no significant effect of any of the independent variables on overall FLE levels was found. The lack of significant differences despite some distinguishable trends observed may be due to the fact that more than one variable influences on the FLE levels simultaneously. These findings will now be discussed more in detail according to each variable.

Regarding the age variable, surprisingly, the descriptive results show an opposite trend with respect to those observed in previous studies, that is, that older learners tend to experience increasingly more FLE in their foreign language classes (Dewaele, 2022b; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). In contrast, the younger participants (18-21 years old) in this study had a higher overall FLE, closely followed by the 22-25 years old group, and both groups surpassed the 3.5 threshold, confirming that they had a moderate level of FLE. However, the 30+ years old group was in the last place with the lowest FLE level out of the three groups, and actually did not pass the threshold, so it cannot be said that they were experiencing FLE. Additionally, inferential statistics were unable to suggest that age had any significant effect on the FLE levels. Also, a downward linear trend was observed in this sample, contrary to results from other studies that discovered a non-linear trend (Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Mierzwa, 2018), suggesting that FLE reduces along with an older age, at least in this sample. It is unclear why an opposite trend was observed in this study, but a possible explanation might be the lack of homogeneity in the groups, since the youngest group comprised the vast majority, while the oldest group was comprised of only 3 participants. Another possible hint more related to the Italian educational context may arise from a comment made by two different interviewees that caught the researcher’s attention (see MR’s and BR’s answers in interviews 2 and 3 in **Appendix D**): when asked to

state which undergraduate or graduate program they were and to specify the year, the students who were in their final year or who seemed to be beyond that were very quick and keen to clarify that they were still “*in corso*”, namely, that they were not behind with their studies and were only writing their bachelor’s or master’s thesis within the program’s official deadline for graduating. The aim of this question was only to help melt the ice before asking the students deeper questions, so this response was eye-catching. This kind of reaction may suggest that Italian students place a potential high degree of importance to not falling behind with their studies and graduate in time. The students from the 30+ group already surpass the age when most Italian students would normally finish a bachelor’s or master’s degree; it is unknown if they were behind with their studies or not, but if so, this may be a potential emotional element which debilitates their FLE. More studies addressing the Italian context would be necessary in order to see if these age trend on FLE is replicated in university students and better clarify the causes.

Regarding the results from the gender variable, the descriptive analyses revealed virtually no difference between the female and male groups, since they showed an overall FLE score of 3.67 and 3.68, respectively. Naturally, the inferential statistics also failed to find a significant effect of gender on students’ FLE; however, both female and male participants’ score suggest that they experienced FLE. These results are not entirely consistent with previous studies, since most commonly a greater FLE level has been found in females in contrast with males (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2016, 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Wang & Jiang, 2022). Only Mierzwa (2018) reported that the male participants in her sample experienced more FLE than their female counterparts. In this study, the male’s score could be said to be higher but by a negligible margin, so both scores may as well be considered basically equal. A possible explanation for this result may be the vast majority of female participants (almost 90% of the sample) in contrast with the male minority. Unfortunately, as Dewaele and MacIntyre point out (2014), this sort of distribution is very typical in the classrooms of university degree programs in languages, and also in web-based questionnaires in SLA research. Typically, the greater FLE scores obtained from female participants have generally been attributed to the fact that females seem to be better FL learners and score higher because they tend to experience more intense emotions than their male peers (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Thus, it would be interesting to see if these results are replicated in

samples with a greater number of male participants in order to observe if this trend is repeated or if the 10 males in our sample were students who particularly enjoyed learning German.

As for the multilingualism variable, the results of this study match those observed in previous studies, that is, the fact that FLE increases the more languages a student knows (e.g., Botes et al., 2020; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). However, this trend has not been observed in all studies such as in Dewaele et al (2018). More specifically, in the present study all multilingual groups passed the FLE score threshold and in general the scores did not differ by a large margin: the lowest score was from bilinguals, followed by trilinguals, then participants who spoke 5+ languages, and the highest FLE score belonged to participants who spoke 4 languages. In this case, the progression of higher FLE along with a higher degree of multilingualism was not entirely linear since it descended by a small margin upon reaching the group who spoke 5+ languages; however, a clear upward trend could be observed, since the trilingual and pentalingual+ groups had the exact same number of participants, yet the group who had higher multilingualism still scored slightly higher. Thus, the findings may seem to suggest that speaking and having studied more languages is beneficial for higher FLE levels, although, once again, no significant effect on FLE was detected by the inferential statistics applied. Other scholars have already highlighted that many studies seem to obtain contradicting results, so it is still unclear whether multilingualism helps FLE because of the students' accumulated experience in FL learning or if learning more languages influences personality (Dewaele, 2022b). As it has been stated before, Italy and Europe aim at increasing multilingualism in the national educational curriculum, so it is not surprising to see a high degree of multilingualism in the sample, which mainly consisted of well-educated young adult learners (Dan & Yuwei, 2021). Building on this line of thought, Hoffmann (2013) also highlighted that many young Italian learners may transfer useful elements from their knowledge of English, another Germanic language, in order to facilitate German acquisition. These may be possible explanations in support of the FL experience hypothesis, but there is not enough data to clarify this controversy, so it would be interesting if more studies were to include this variable in their designs.

Concerning the variable of FL mastery, namely, the German language proficiency level in this case, the findings from this study were also in line with those generally reported in previous research, showing that learners who possess a more advanced proficiency of an FL tend to experience more FL than those learners at the beginning stages (e.g., Dewaele et

al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Mierzwa, 2018, 2019). Specifically for this study, the results revealed that the highest mean FLE scores were concentrated on the higher proficiency level groups, namely, the intermediate (B1), upper intermediate (B2), and Advanced User (C1) with overall high FLE scores ranging from 3.71 to 3.79. In contrast, the two beginner levels considered in this study, Beginner (A1) and Basic User (A2), obtained lower FLE scores. In particular, the A1 group obtained a low score of 3.36 and did not pass the FLE score threshold. Nevertheless, no statistical significance was found for the overall FLE level. Still, the upward trend suggesting more FLE along with a higher German proficiency level is still clear, since the A2 group and the C1 group had almost the same size, yet the fact that the C1 group exhibited a higher FLE level is evident. A fact further supporting this point is the finding of a positive significant correlation between German language proficiency and Social Enjoyment, which means that if the German mastery levels increase, so does the Social Enjoyment of the students. These results are particularly similar to those reported in Dewaele et al. (2018), where a sudden jump in FLE level was also observed in the intermediate proficiency levels. According to Dewaele et al. (2018), a possible explanation for this phenomenon is that students at the intermediate level already possess sufficient base knowledge of the language that lets them tackle down the more challenging tasks that are typical of these levels in the FL classroom, promoting their interest and autonomy, which would in turn boost their FLE. On the other hand, it may also be possible that Social Enjoyment increases with higher levels of German due to the students being able to express themselves better during the lesson for activities and group work with their peers, boosting their confidence and making them more prone for participation and linguistic exploration. Also based on this assumption, the low FLE in students at the lower proficiency levels may be caused by potential feelings of frustration since most communicative tasks would be difficult to carry out at those levels, particularly if the students are too eager to use or take their German to a higher level. Some studies have also highlighted this tendency where beginner students with low FL proficiency exhibit in general low FLE levels such as in Wang and Jiang (2022). It is also interesting to note that, in this study, most students in the A1 group did not declare knowing German when asked about which languages they knew, which may be indicative of their low confidence regarding German language in communicative tasks, which may in turn debilitate their FLE.

Another variable under study was the type of major, namely, students whose major was German language and had mandatory German classes as part of their curriculum in comparison with those students belonging to other majors and who were learning German as a foreign language outside their study plans by their own choice. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, not many studies have included this type of independent variable in their designs; however, there have been a few recent studies that investigated the FLE differences between students from linguistic or modern language faculties against students from other majors such as in Kaplan (2022). The findings from the present study revealed similar results to those observed in Kaplan's (2022) Turkish sample, namely, that participants from other majors obtained higher FLE scores than those participants majoring in German language. Actually, the scores obtained from participants in other majors were similar in both studies: the Turkish sample in Kaplan (2022) not majoring in English as an FL obtained an overall FLE score of 3.82, whereas the participants not majoring in German in this study scored 3.86. In contrast, students specializing in German scored 3.62 in this study. Nevertheless, it can be said that both groups still experienced FLE, the difference being that the other-major group exhibited a high FLE level, although this difference did not reach statistical significance. An element that should also be taken into account in this regard may be the disparity in the group numbers, since almost 80% of participants were studying to specialize in German, while the remaining 18 participants belonged to other majors, which means that the findings from this study should not be taken as a confirmation that the type of major may not have a significant effect on FLE in other contexts. On the other hand, a possible explanation for the lack of significance in this study may come from the interview data, since out of the five interviewees, only one participant studied Foreign Trade, so she was not majoring in German. However, similar to her peers from German majors, this student was very interested in the German language, had studied German since high school, had a high awareness of what went right in her lesson and had specific suggestions regarding how to improve her German language classes or how to make them more enjoyable (see CB's answers in interview 1 in **Appendix D**). As our sample had a high degree of multilingualism, this may suggest that the sample in general had a high FL learning awareness even in students not majoring in linguistic subjects. Yet, the group not majoring in German still scored slightly higher in this study. A possible explanation in favour of a difference could be that German language majors have a higher awareness and a more critical view regarding the FL classes they receive in

comparison with students from other majors, who may worry less about these issues probably because they do not feel the pressure of having to excel in German or maybe due to a lack of specialized knowledge about FL didactic practices, so they may have a higher degree of freedom to dedicate themselves to the German language classes as they come. Further studies in larger samples may clarify if these results are replicated or not.

Finally, the last variable investigated was the class delivery method and it divided the participants between those attending face-to-face, hybrid, and online lessons. In the particular case of this variable, since it is deeply related to the current post-pandemic period, there is no other similar published study addressing FLE in these specific circumstances in Italy to the best of the researcher's knowledge. This is not surprising because, as Zancajo et al. (2022) stated, the 'post-pandemic' situation has been managed in various different ways by each European country, which means that the current Italian educational university context at the time of this study may not be entirely comparable to other contexts abroad. Additionally, given that this post-pandemic period can still be considered a recent development, it could be the case that FLE studies investigating this period and its particularities have not yet been published. Thus, comparisons will be made with studies investigating FLE carried out during the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic to a reasonable extent. In this sense, the findings for this variable revealed that the highest FLE score was obtained by the participants attending hybrid classes, followed by those attending online lesson, and lastly the participants who had face-to-face classes. All groups experienced FLE, although the hybrid group with the highest FLE score of 3.82 could be said to have experienced a high FLE level. However, the difference between the groups was, once again, not significant according to inferential statistics. Also, contrasting findings have been observed when comparing these results with previous studies. In Resnik and Dewaele's (2021) study on a mainly Austrian sample during ERT, it could be observed that university students attending online classes had significantly lower FLE scores than those still attending in-person. However, Wang & Jiang's (2022) study with university students learning Chinese online during ERT revealed that the sample scored a high FLE level. Due to the distinct contexts, those studies did not consider a hybrid model of class delivery, but it could be said that the results from the present study align more with Wang and Jiang's (2022) results, since hybrid and online classes scored higher. Taking the Italian context into account, these results may not be entirely surprising, since it has been stated that university students expressed contradicting opinions regarding the return to face-to-face

teaching in Italy (Zunino & Monaco, 2022). In the interviews, some participants also mentioned memorable FLE episodes involving online technologies such as a fun use of Zoom's backgrounds during online class (see BR's answers in interview 3 in **Appendix D**), or the introduction of online games to foster motivation and that a student deeply enjoyed (see MY's answers in interview 4 in **Appendix D**). During the return to full face-to-face lessons, some of these online and novel technological elements may have been lost. In this regard, an option that may represent a compromise between both sides, such as a hybrid model of class delivery, may be perceived more favourably by students and boost their positive emotions, at least during this specific historical period. However, more studies are needed in the future in order to see a more comprehensive picture of the pandemic after-effects in the educational context.

6.1.3 Identified sources of FLE

The third research question aimed to identify the sources of particularly memorable FLE episodes from students' accounts in relation to their experiences while learning German as a foreign language. In this regard, the following specific research question was posed: "What is identified most frequently by the students as sources and key aspects of particularly strong or memorable previous FLE experiences?". The thematic content analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the open question and semi-structured interviews revealed that, in general, participants most frequently pointed out to the teacher and the teacher's qualities as the main FLE source or key aspect or particularly memorable FLE episodes, closely followed by the category focused on personal FLE perceptions, and finally, the sphere with the lowest number of mentions was the one related to the social environment and relationships in the FL classroom. All the themes were found to be compatible with the three dimensions adopted by the study, and were categorized as FLE-Teacher, FLE-Personal, and FLE-Social, a classification that was also replicated in most previous studies on FLE sources (e.g., Kaplan, 2022; Mierzwa, 2019; Wang & Jiang, 2022; Wang et al., 2021). However, when discussing a subjective interpretation of the complex interactions of SLA and FLL emotions, the author of this study believes that it makes little sense to treat them separately; thus, they will be discussed taking into account this dynamic nature.

As the first main thematic category identified, the high prevalence of mentions involving the FL teacher in participants' accounts is in line with results from most previous studies in the field with international, Chinese, Polish, and Turkish samples, where FLE sources related to the teacher also occupied the first place in the frequency of mentions (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Kaplan, 2022; Mierzwa, 2019; Wang & Jiang, 2022). In fact, as Wang et al. (2021) affirm, the critical role of the teacher in mediating a positive emotional environment that fosters FL learning in the classrooms has been confirmed in Western and Asian cultures in previous studies. The participants in this sample, being mostly from an Italian or European culture, also follow this trend. It was evident that students appreciated a teacher's positive attitudes and also high emotional awareness regarding their support to students and management of the classroom environment. Therefore, it is not surprising that FLE may be highly dependent on the teacher, as well as to expect FLE levels to vary according to who the teacher is, what they do in class, and the impression they give to the students.

In this regard, most frequent mentions involved an encouraging teacher: participants reported feeling encouraged by the teacher during times when they felt hesitant or potentially anxious about activities in which they were not sure how to proceed, such as orally participating in class, trying to answer a question they were not sure how to answer correctly, or just feel comfortable enough to make mistakes while learning without worrying about being judged. Contrary to children, young adults are usually not that keen and in general find it more difficult to freely explore and make mistakes while learning, even when they know that it may be beneficial. This can also be seen from Pekrun's (2006) CVT and Fredrickson's (2013) BBT perspective: despite the student's appraisal of control that may let them perceive low controllability or that they are not competent enough to participate orally in class and prevent them from doing so, the teacher's positive support and creation of an emotionally safe environment encourages them to take an more broadened attitude of exploration and curious play during their FL learning, producing enjoyment. According to BBT, this positive emotion also helps building resilience and in mediating the effects of negative emotions such as FLA, which may gradually help the students in actively being more prone to and less fearful of participation even if they make mistakes, which also further validates its nature as a positive activating achievement emotion. Students' narratives during the interviews stressed their appreciation towards such a safe environment and how they felt that the teacher's

interventions helped them perform tasks that otherwise they did not feel confident to do or may not have done during class, while still being able to perform them with their own ability and without the teacher giving them the right answer directly, in particular regarding oral interventions or challenging tasks.

Building on this, it is also noteworthy that, on many occasions, such successful interventions from the teacher also led to the students feeling pride over their German language performance or to a sudden awareness of their FL progress after successfully being able to perform a challenging task during their German language classes. Although sometimes the FLE perceived was more private and felt at a very personal level without direct intervention of the teacher (e.g., when receiving good marks or a positive assessment on homework), on many occasions it is fair to believe that the teacher was involved to a greater extent (e.g., instances when the teacher gives praise or compliments that help the student realize how outstanding their performance actually was). This may also explain the high frequency of mentions related to the FLE-Personal category in this sample, which is slightly lower than that of FLE-Teacher. On the other hand, the teacher may even involve the peers in this dynamic, and such a case was reported by a participant in the data collected from the open question: the student publicly received praise from the teacher after an outstanding presentation in German in front of the entire class, while also receiving compliments from his fellow peers, who may potentially have followed the teacher's lead. This participant remembers all these elements while feeling particularly proud, reporting that this event made him suddenly aware of his progress in German (see **Appendix C**). Such accounts suggest that the interaction of emotions is dynamic by nature and may involve various actors or even more than one positive or negative emotion simultaneously.

Particularly in the case of challenging activities, some participants reported both negative emotions (e.g., FLA) and positive ones (e.g., pride, satisfaction, motivation) such as FLE in the same event, a phenomenon also observed in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). This is evidenced in MR²'s interview (see interview 2 in **Appendix D**), where she reported feeling anxious and overwhelmed when appraising the seemingly difficult or impossible task of understanding a German dialect. However, with the teacher's guidance and encouragement, she was able to perform the activity and experienced a higher degree of FLE precisely because she was able to surmount such a difficult task, which may even be perceived as a

² Participants in the interviews of this study are mentioned only by their initials to protect their privacy.

milestone, while also realizing the extent of her capabilities in German. Further supporting this aspect, other students reported feeling a particular strong sense of satisfaction or pride after completing a challenging learning activity, and this also extended even to the FL itself, since many perceived German as a personal, significant challenge. This may also find a possible explanation in the holistic view built on CVT and BBT. As Dewaele and Li (2020) explain, both highlight the need to consider the crucial effects of both negative and positive emotions in cognitive and learning processes. In this case, enjoyment may help students develop coping responses or enhance enjoyment when under the influence of negative emotions such as FLA, which would in turn have a subsequent positive effect on the student's performance.

Additionally, other FLE sources related to the teacher included the teacher's friendly and approachable attitude towards students, and the teacher's interest in students' preferences and opinions. The latter in particular is also linked to other themes reported by the participants such as an interesting lesson topic, and the use of games or fun activities in the FL classroom. Some students, both in the interviews and the open question data, reported that they particularly appreciated the fact that the teacher paid special attention to their needs, as well as their personal input, and actively took their opinions in consideration during the lesson creation process. Thus, besides feeling valued, empowered and acknowledged by the teacher, they also enjoyed lessons that included topics that they found personally interesting, fun or useful. As MY stated in her interview (see interview 4 in **Appendix D**), the existence of a reciprocal dialog between the teacher and the students made her enjoy the class and feel that her whole German learning experience was different. The students who reported these teacher attitudes also declared more frequently that the teacher used authentic, novel, technological or interactive material during their lessons as per the students' suggestions and interests, producing more enjoyment and potentially broadening their creative exploration strategies during learning as per BBT (Fredrickson, 2013). This same participant also provided a FLE account related to an well-designed online game that her teacher used to conduct regular reviews of the German grammar they were learning. As MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) stated, gamification in the FL classroom even among adults might be a crucial component in order to unleash their language learning potential, since BBT suggests that the strength of a positive-broadening emotion lies in the fact that humans by nature build specific skills, resources and social bonds during play, which then persist in time even after the enjoyable

feeling is forgotten (Fredrickson, 2001, 2013). Despite this, the number of accounts involving gamification was relatively low in this sample.

Another category that exhibited a low number of mentions was the one related to the students' social environment, namely, FLE-Social. Some themes belonging to this category have already been mentioned directly or indirectly in the preceding paragraphs, such as the account involving compliments and recognition from peers, as well as the mentions of a comfortable and positive atmosphere in the classroom. Some participants highlighted that the relaxed and positive atmosphere in class, the lack of pressure or absence of fear of being judged by their peers or by the teacher made the lessons enjoyable, while also fostering social bonds and a support network with their peers, further contributing to a general environment of well-being in the classroom. One participant from the interviews also added that, in her class, the teacher played a vital role in this aspect because it was the teacher who guided them and promoted this positive social relationship between the group of students during their German learning.

However, the low frequency of mentions regarding the social themes suggests that this was not the norm for the majority of the sample, and also provides a potential explanation for the low Social Enjoyment score in the S-FLES revealed on the quantitative analyses for this sample. Indeed, when asked to identify potential FLE sources that they felt were still lacking in their German class, many interviewees wished they had a closer relationship with or more opportunities to work together with their peers. Other suggestions included a friendlier or at least less distant relationship with their FL teachers, the use of more authentic material related to topics such as German culture, literature, and music, but also authentic conversational or lexical material with clear practical uses in a real-life situation and, lastly, more interactive material and games during class.

6.2 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) from a Positive Psychology perspective in university students learning German as a foreign language in the instructional context of northeast Italy during the current post-pandemic period. Thus, this study proposed three research questions that aimed to: firstly, determine the FLE situation and FLE levels of students; secondly, explore the possibility of a significant effect of learner-

internal and learner-external independent variables related to the students' German learning experience, namely, demographic, socio-biographical and FL-related variables; and thirdly, identify the sources of particularly memorable FLE episodes from students' accounts in relation to their experiences while learning German as a foreign language. To this end, general descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were applied on quantitative data collected from a web-based questionnaire, while thematic content analysis was used for the analysis of qualitative data obtained from an open question in the questionnaire and online semi-structured interviews. Participants in this study were 81 students from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, University of Bologna, and University of Padua. A vast majority were female, Italian native speakers, 18-21 years old, from bachelor's degrees, pursuing German majors, and were attending face-to-face classes.

In general, the results of the analysis suggest that participants in this sample experienced a moderately high FLE during their German learning experience, and the FLE they felt during their lessons was particularly connected to the dimensions of Teacher Appreciation, followed by their Personal Enjoyment, and much less related to their Social Enjoyment due to the low FLE levels obtained in this last dimension. These results are in line with other previous studies, which usually also exhibit this line-up with respect to the FLE dimensions scores. The FLE levels of this study are not entirely unexpected, since the sample was self-selected and consisted of majority of German major students, who may already have had a positive attitude and interest towards the German language. On the other hand, the low levels of Social Enjoyment may be caused by the class delivery style of universities itself, which may translate into a more distant social relationship with teachers and peers.

Additionally, findings suggest that there is no significant effect of variables such as age, gender, multilingualism, FL mastery, major type, and class delivery method on students' overall FLE, at least for this sample. However, there would seem to be a trend for higher FLE in participants who had already mastered several languages, who attended hybrid classes, who were younger, and from other majors. Particularly in the case of those who had reached a higher level in German, a significant positive correlation was found with Social Enjoyment. The results were partially in line with previous research, except for the age variable which exhibited an opposite trend. Possible explanations were the lack of homogeneity in the sample groups with regards to some variables such as gender, age, type of major, and class delivery

type, as well as the particular characteristics of the Italian instructional context at universities in the current post-pandemic period.

Furthermore, results suggest that participants identify as sources of memorable FLE episodes and seem to derive joy most frequently from aspects related to the FL teacher, followed by their own private or personal sphere, while sources from their social environment in the classroom were much less mentioned. These findings were in line with sources observed in previous research. In this regard, most frequent mentions involved an encouraging teacher, who frequently was a key factor on successful interventions that led to the students feeling pride over their German language performance or to a sudden awareness of their FL progress. Some participants reported both negative emotions and positive ones such as FLE in the same event, followed by a strong personal sense of satisfaction or pride after completing a challenging learning activity or receiving praise, perceiving even German as a personal, significant challenge. The teacher's friendly and approachable attitude towards students, and the teacher's interest in students' preferences and opinions were relevant FLE sources that were also linked to other themes reported such as an interesting lesson topic, and the use of games or fun activities in the FL classroom. Regarding the few mentions on social environment, participants reported a relaxed and positive atmosphere in class, lack of pressure or fear of being judged by their peers or teacher, and the promotion of social bonds with their peers. All identified sources and key aspects suggest that the interaction between emotions is dynamic by nature and involves various actors or positive and negative emotions together, while also pointing to its usefulness under a PP perspective as an activating emotion that helps build resilience and mediate effects of negative emotions, further contributing to well-being in the classroom.

6.2.1 Limitations of the study

As in any research design, it should be noted that this study also has some relevant limitations. The sample size may constitute the first limitation. Although it cannot be said that the sample had a small size, it also cannot be considered large: we managed to obtain more than 50 participants, but the ideal threshold of more than 100 participants in order to completely assure normality was still not reached (Dörnyei, 2007). Besides this, there was a general lack of homogeneity between groups regarding the independent variables, which may

have been improved if the study had been able to reach a higher scope and a greater number of participants. In this regard, it should be highlighted that female students made up the large majority of participants. An assessment of a larger sample of students might have improved the study's reliability and allowed the research findings to be generalized on a larger scale.

Besides the sample size, another important limitation is that the sample was mostly self-selected. It should be noted that the study used responses of learners who filled out the questionnaire and also participated in the interviews voluntarily. This may have led to biased results, since it may be assumed that they were already motivated FL learners in order to dedicate their time to participate in a FLE research. Particularly, verbal self-report measures involving emotions are limited in reliability and validity due to cognitive bias and social desirability (Dörnyei, 2007). This represents a crucial issue, especially during the analysis of qualitative data from participants' narratives, because the interpretation of the qualitative data in this study was under the influence of the researcher's views and subjective interpretations, which may have potentially shaped the research findings.

Additionally, although a moderately high level of FLE among learners was found in the learning context in this study, the lack of pre-pandemic data of their FLE levels in the Italian context prevented further comparisons. Also, we only focused on a few socio-demographical variables, and many others were left behind due to time and resources constraints. On the other hand, the present study was carried out at a very specific historical moment after the Covid-19 pandemic, namely, a particular post-pandemic period of recuperation, where the effects and influence of the pandemic on educational contexts will potentially still be determined in the following years. Thus, it is open to question whether these findings generalize to other learning environments even within the Italian context. It also is an open question whether FLE would show the same patterns in other parts of Italy, such as learning German as a foreign language in the northwest regions or in the south of the country.

Finally, as emphasized in the previous section, emotions seem to be complex multidimensional constructs that continuously interact with each other within the FL classroom ecology. Thus, it may also be assumed that instruments such as questionnaires are not entirely adequate to capture the dynamic nature of emotions, which is the reason why the semi-structured interview phase was added in order to give voice to the participants' experiences. However, the time and resources constraints prevented the application of more

sophisticated ecological or dynamic methodologies applied in recent FLE research. As a result, it should also be acknowledged that the quantitative findings from this study may potentially at some point provide a static view of students' emotions to a certain degree.

6.2.2 Pedagogical implications

As evidenced by the analysis and subsequent discussion of the findings from this study, FLE research can have significant pedagogical implications. Pedagogical practices guided by learners' emotions would be more considerate of not just the cognitive but also the emotional needs of students (Macintyre et al., 2019). As it was pointed out in the preceding chapters, positive psychology and enjoyment represent more than just feeling happy: they imply a sense of fulfilment that will persist and bring an upward spiral of well-being (Fredrickson, 2013). The general results from this research suggest that higher levels of FLE have an enormous potential to contribute to students' personal growth, FL performance and FL learning experience.

More specifically, the findings from this study showed that promoting teacher appreciation, personal enjoyment and social enjoyment are vital for enjoyment in the FL classroom, so FL teachers, learners, and administration staff of FL courses need to emphasize the creation of a positive classroom. First of all, it is crucial that teachers completely understand and obtain an awareness of their role in boosting students' enjoyment through both their own interactions with them and the social climate they foster in their classroom. As Wang et al. (2021) explain, effective language teaching is more than just relaying content and knowledge while employing all of the latest teaching methodologies; it is also a highly emotional activity where teachers engage, communicate with, and teach each student in an enjoyable learning environment. As evidenced in the results from the open question and interviews' analyses in this study, FL teachers would profit from displaying a friendly, approachable and positive attitude while supporting and promoting social bonds between students in order to create an emotionally safe classroom environment where students feel encouraged to explore and experiment with the FL. In order to do this, challenging tasks, mutual trust, lack of pressure, praise and encouragement seem to encourage students to learn and continuously create more positive emotions in the classroom. Also, based on the results of this study, the author of this research suggests in particular that teachers should increase their

use of certain strategies as per some participants' own suggestions: interactive games, increase the amount of authentic material, practical uses of the FL in real-life situations, fostering social interactions between learners, and empathetic teaching in order to further boost FLE.

In this sense, it is also proposed that teachers use FLE study findings into their instructional practice, such as taking into account the identified FLE sources and implementing appropriate emotional interventions to help students increase their FLE. As MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) explain, an element in teacher's favour is that emotions are typically involuntary reactions, thus teachers may be able create the conditions to encourage them in the classroom. Also, as per BBT's principles (Fredrickson, 2013), teachers should be aware that these fleeting positive emotions can also encourage students and assist them in developing resources that will benefit their FL learning in the long term, even if they do not see concrete results in the short term. Consequently, another important implication that has also been mentioned by other scholars (e.g., Dewaele, 2022b; Guo & Qiu, 2022) is that the institutions educating FL teachers should provide them with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge regarding positive language education based on PP, such as awareness about FLE and other positive emotions, in particular how to use them in the classroom to help pupils boost positive emotions, effectively control the impact of negative ones, and achieve a general improved well-being and successful FL learning.

6.2.3 Future research

As mentioned in previous chapters from the literature review, past and current research has reported contradictory results regarding the effect on FLE of independent variables such as age, gender, multilingualism, among others, since some findings have found statistical significance while others not (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Mierzwa, 2019). The first advice for future study to improve our understanding of FLE among learners is to undertake studies with bigger samples to boost data-to-population generalizability of the findings. In order to account for the learners' background as much as possible, research might benefit from delving further into the link between FLE and other less explored socio-demographic variables.

The interaction between positive, negative emotions and other constructs, in particular, have a great potential for future research and FL emotion theory development. As mentioned in the limitations section of this study, a static view of emotions should be avoided as much as possible due to their nature abundant in dynamism and complexity. Thus, research approaches, such as the idiodynamic approach (Boudreau et al., 2018), which considers the interaction of positive and negative emotion as a whole in the classroom ecology, should also be applied more frequently. On this same line of thought, emotion theories that account for a comprehensive understanding of this complexity and multidimensionality such as BBT and CVT together under a holistic PP approach should continue to be applied in future studies in order to complement each other and go beyond the use of only one theory. Also, considering that the classroom environment and atmosphere are of vital importance for boosting FLE, future research should continue with the promotion of research focused on emotion contagion in L2 classrooms such as the study carried out by Talebzadeh et al. (2020). This is based on the fact that educational psychology has suggested that emotions are not only perceived, but are also communicated between students and teachers, which influences how they interact and learn (Pekrun, 2006).

Additionally, future research could always profit from more advanced or elaborated statistics and research design methods, such as longitudinal research designs and qualitative designs, which are particularly important due to the characteristics of the FLE construct. Additionally, using a variety of emotion measures and strategically triangulating quantitative and qualitative data should assist to address some of the drawbacks of previous and ongoing research. On the other hand, empirical studies on specific contexts and how learners from various cultural contexts conceptualize and experience positive emotions like FLE on LOTEs has been not as rich as large studies with international samples and with English as a foreign language (Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). Thus, future L2 researchers should heed Proietti Ergün and Dewaele's (2021) call in order to further expand positive emotions and FLE research in other countries and LOTEs. Given the scarcity of positive emotion and FLE research in the Italian context mentioned in the literature review, as a final suggestion, the author of this study would particularly encourage researchers to address this gap in the Italian instructional context under a holistic PP perspective for the benefit of the whole L2 and FL educational community.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire

German Foreign Language Enjoyment in Italy

My name is Carla and for my MA's thesis in Educational Linguistics at Ca' Foscari I'm conducting research to explore Foreign Language Enjoyment, a positive emotion, in university students in northeast Italy who are learning German as a foreign language at university after returning to face-to-face learning within an almost 'post-pandemic normality' in the current period. By answering the questionnaire, you will also assist in improving our understanding of positive emotions during foreign language learning, leading to better pedagogical practices and more enjoyable experiences for students, so your input is greatly appreciated. The questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes, and your responses are completely anonymous. You may answer open questions either in English or Italian, you can use the language you feel most comfortable with.

Thank you for your participation!

The questionnaire has a purely descriptive value and has no diagnostic purpose. Data will be collected anonymously, it will not be disclosed to third parties, and it will be used exclusively for research and educational purposes in full respect of privacy, as required by Legislative Decree 163/2017, Ex art. 13 D.L. 196/2003 and pursuant to art. 13 European Regulation 2016/679. Check the "I agree" box below and then click next to participate in the study. If you do not wish to participate, simply close out of this browser window.

- I agree

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your age range? *

- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30+

2. Please specify your gender: *

- Female
- Male

3. What is your nationality? *

- Italian
- Other: _____

4. Please indicate if your study program is Bachelor's (Laurea Triennale) or Master's (Laurea Magistrale) degree level:

- Bachelor's
- Master's

5. Please select the University where you are taking your German language classes:

- Ca' Foscari
- IUAV
- Università di Padova (University of Padua)
- Università di Bologna (University of Bologna)
- Other: _____

6. Which languages do you know? Please specify the languages in which you are able to communicate from L1 until max. L5 in chronological order.

*Example: L1 is your mother tongue and L2 would be the first foreign language you learned. If applicable, you may specify up to three languages as your L1.

7. How would you rate your current proficiency in the German language? *

- Beginner — A1
- Basic User — A2
- Intermediate — B1
- Upper Intermediate — B2
- Advanced User — C1
- Fluent — C2

8. Are you studying German language as a core subject of your major or study program?

- Yes, it's mandatory or I'm majoring in this language
- No, but I'm taking it as an elective in my study plan
- No, it's not present in my study plan

9. In which modality are you following your German language classes?

Please select the one that best fits your attendance situation.

- Face-to-face classes
- Online classes
- Hybrid classes (sometimes in presence, sometimes online)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENJOYMENT

In this part, you are going to answer some questions about your Foreign Language Enjoyment, which refers to the state of experiencing enjoyment in learning a foreign language. That is, positive feelings like feeling happy, having fun, having a sense of achievement or just simply enjoying your language class. As you respond to the following items, please think about your current German language classes at university. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

In the German language class:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I've learned interesting things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teacher is friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We laugh a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am proud of my accomplishments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teacher is encouraging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We form a tight group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy my German language classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teacher is supportive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a good atmosphere in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

OPEN QUESTION

10. Have you ever experienced a specific event that you think you particularly enjoyed or that made you feel a sense of achievement during German class?

If yes, please describe it as detailed as possible.

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTION

- Would you be willing to be contacted during the next two weeks for a short interview online (max. 15 min)? If yes, please write your email to receive further information.

*You will receive compensation for your time, would not be required to have your camera on and can be either in Italian or English. Your contact information along with your data will be used exclusively for research purposes and will be deleted afterwards.

Appendix B: Consent Form for Interview



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

**Dipartimento di Studi
Linguistici e Culturali
Comparati**

CONSENT TO AUDIO- OR VIDEO RECORDING & TRANSCRIPTION

*pursuant to Legislative Decree 163/2017, art. 13 Legislative
Decree 196/2003 and art. 13 European Regulation
2016/679.*

GERMAN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENJOYMENT IN UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN ITALY

RESEARCHER: CARLA ESPINOZA, M.A. GRADUAND

Dear participant,

This study involves the audio recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recording or the transcript. Only the researcher will be able to listen to or view the recordings.

Before requesting the written consent necessary for the treatment, we provide you with the following information.

- The files will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy.
- Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study.
- Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.
- The data shall be processed in compliance with the principles of correctness, lawfulness and transparency dictated by Legislative Decree 196/2003 and shall not be disclosed to other subjects.
- Your rights in relation to the processing are those provided for by Legislative Decree 163/2017, pursuant to art. 13 Legislative Decree 196/2003 and art. 13 European Regulation 2016/679.

By signing this form, I am allowing the researcher to audio record me as part of this research. I also understand that this consent for recording is effective until the following date: 02/04/2023. On or before that date, the files will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Responses to Open Question

1. No, but I can say that communicating with the others in German, even if they don't want to speak it, it's a good thing (even if sometimes I'm not able or I can't understand what the people say).
2. We listened to a track where a group of German people were speaking in their own dialects about a interesting topic (environment and organisations that protect animals and landscapes). I feel a sense of achievement when I realised I was actually able to understand them because of the level I reached due to these classes.
3. A good grade in a portfolio that is particularly difficult.
4. During the first written exam simulation I used only a German-German dictionary, and I felt no need of using any German-Italian/Italian-German dictionary. That made me feel proud of what I'm doing and how I am working. It made me realize that I'm improving more than what I used to think.
5. When I was in Munich for a school trip 3 years ago I could interact quite easily with the locals and my host family.
6. Non ho in mente un evento specifico che io abbia apprezzato, ma è proprio l'atmosfera generale del corso di lingua tedesca a lasciarmi sensazioni piacevoli e positive. Penso che questo sia un dato di grande valore proprio perché va oltre un singolo momento e arriva a comprendere tanti aspetti. Ho quasi sempre voglia di partecipare alle lezioni di tedesco perché sono interessanti e utili, e mi sento libera di sbagliare per imparare. I professori sono appassionati, collaborativi, sembrano orientati verso un insegnamento che ci possa lasciare qualcosa e allo stesso tempo sembrano disposti a imparare a loro volta qualcosa dagli interventi degli studenti. I programmi sono ben sviluppati.
7. As we were correcting the simulation of the exam, the Professor took my work as positive example for my colleagues to follow. The Professor stated it was detailed not only from the content point of view, but also from a grammatical and lexical one. I was really surprised in a positive way, since German is the foreign language with which I struggled the most during my university studies (way more than English). This really boosted my self-esteem.
8. Good results in difficult essay productions.
9. Discutere attivamente su dei temi introdotti in classe.
10. Yes, when I was finally able to write my first text completely in German and when I was able to communicate with a mother tongue even if it was a short sentence.
11. During class we were being corrected on certain grammar issues we made while speaking. Later on, after repeating the same mistake twice while talking, I managed to catch myself making an error and corrected myself, which was appreciated by the teacher and made me feel like I made progress.
12. In another case, we were looking at texts of an assignment that we corrected after

getting a feedback from the teacher. The teacher was happy with the way we all had corrected our own mistakes by ourselves, which made me feel satisfied about my work.

13. Yes, when I was able to share my own opinion.
14. I felt happy and proud when I managed to write my first text in German.
15. I was very lucky to have one of the best German language teachers in my second and third year of University. She was very supportive and always made us feel comfortable when talking in German during lesson, I really appreciated her. I spent my second and half of the third year doing online lessons due to Covid and I felt like my German wasn't getting better because I didn't feel encouraged to talk or to actively learn it. When I went to Austria (Erasmus) and Germany (Workaway project) I felt like many of the things I learned in class came very handy to communicate with the others. I mostly thank my teacher for it, for always being so kind to us.
16. Being able to give a presentation in German in front of my high school classmates and being complimented on my fluency.
17. Al Liceo durante gli Open Day con nuovi ragazzi che si avvicinavano per la prima volta alla lingua tedesca, la mia docente di tedesco mi ha chiesto di affiancarla durante la lezione aperta perché ero l'unica della mia classe veramente interessata a scoprire la lingua tedesca e quindi ad essere dialogativa con la mia docente. Mi sono sentita molto proud di non aver paura di rispondere e parlare in tedesco davanti a tutti.
18. During every German classes we talk about different topics. Every week I can see my little achievements in speaking. Also the teacher make us conscious of our achievements.
19. I have not experienced a specific event, but as time goes I can make more long and complicate phrases.
20. Yes! Here we have some classes with a German native speaker and a few weeks ago to practice our speaking abilities we had to do a simple presentation about our most recent holidays. Again, it was a very short presentation but I was able to talk quite smoothly and to answer all the questions the teacher and my other classmates had It felt really good to finally be able to talk for a bit without huge mistakes!
21. When our teacher corrected our homework in a very detailed way, talking to each of us to explain our mistakes. I appreciated a lot the interest that the teacher showed to each particular student.
22. The lesson about the connection between German language and Music.
23. Yes, during my last class. Our teacher was talking about a German influencer and asked the class whether anyone followed any Italian influencers on social media. In general, she asked about the way we use social media, whether we read the news on online newspapers and so on. I answered with a bunch of complete sentences in German (using subordinate clauses, which we had just learned about), talking about

the way I used social networking sites, the online newspaper I read and the TikToks Italian politicians made during this year's campaign. I used to be able to hold an okay conversation in German, but it had been a while since I'd stopped taking private German lessons and I hadn't yet got the chance to make any significant interventions in class at uni. I was super happy and proud and my fellow students even complimented me. In general, I get very happy when I can actually speak German and have a conversation and when I learn new things, even if I make mistakes. My intervention wasn't perfect, but the effort it takes is satisfying.

24. We talked with teachers about bad words.
25. It's not only an event, it's the fact that while I'm practising I feel emotions in all my body. I deeply enjoy learning German, the way the language sounds, the way it makes me feel.
26. I enjoyed the moment in which, in one of the last lessons, I realised that I've made progress in the language. I was asked to present one of the German islands in front of the class and I was very happy and proud of myself when I saw that I have the competence to talk about without too much effort. It's very motivating when you are asked to challenge yourself doing something as speaking in front of an audience and it's satisfactory when you recognise that you are able to do it. Even if you don't do that perfectly, using the language to communicate information is a step that makes you closer to that language.
27. Quando faccio frasi grammaticalmente corrette al primo colpo.
28. Provare a fare esercizi di traduzione tedesco-italiano, nel mio caso di testi letterari.
29. Studiare e comprendere la letteratura in lingua.

Appendix D: Transcriptions of Interviews

TRANSCRIPT – INTERVIEW 1

Interviewee: CB, female

Date: 06/12/2022

Duration: 00:19:53

Interviewer: Ciao, benvenuta. Innanzitutto grazie per la tua partecipazione a questa intervista. Come puoi sicuramente capire dal mio accento, io non sono madrelingua italiana, quindi dimmi se in qualsiasi momento non capisci qualcosa o hai bisogno di chiarimenti.

Respondent: Ok, va bene.

Interviewer: Prima di farti le domande, ti spiego un po'. Ci sono 7 domande in totale. Ad eccezione delle prime due domande, tutte le altre sono sempre focalizzate su quali emozioni o sentimenti hai provato nella situazione in questione. Tienilo sempre a mente il momento di dare adito alle risposte, per favore. Ecco, sarebbe tutto. Hai qualche domanda?

Respondent: No, no.

Interviewer: Ok, perfetto, quindi iniziamo. Allora, qual è il tuo corso di studi e in che anno sei?

Respondent: Io sto studiando al secondo anno di commercio estero.

Interviewer: Ok, perfetto. E da quando studi il tedesco?

Respondent: Ho iniziato a studiare tedesco in prima superiore, quindi sei anni.

Interviewer: Perché hai scelto di studiare questa lingua? Perché il tedesco?

Respondent: È una lingua che trovo molto interessante forse anche perché le altre lingue che conosco sono comunque più o meno tutte lingue neolatine, quindi magari molto simili anche all'italiano, mentre il tedesco si differenzia un po'. Anche dal punto di vista forse della struttura, la trovo molto interessante. Le regole grammaticali che stravolgono un po' magari. Anche se pensiamo che io, appunto, essendo madrelingua italiana, anche se so alcune regole, come quando per esempio devi mettere un verbo in fondo alla frase che è una cosa che in italiano non faresti mai, in tedesco devi metterti proprio in un'altra prospettiva per riuscire a capire. Quindi secondo me è una cosa molto molto interessante.

Interviewer: Sì, assolutamente. Quindi hai mai vissuto una situazione che ti ha fatto piacere particolarmente o che ti ha fatto provare un senso di realizzazione durante le tue lezioni di tedesco? C'è un evento o un'esperienza che ricordi?

Respondent: Forse non proprio un momento in particolare però in generale, soprattutto alle superiori questo, mi piaceva molto studiare il tedesco quando parlavamo di letteratura, magari anche di storia, in un certo senso, perché studiando letteratura abbiamo parlato

anche un bel po' dei vari contesti storici per contestualizzare quello che studiavamo però appunto leggere una poesia ti aiuta proprio a entrare anche nella cultura e quando ti rendi conto che riesci comunque a capire quello che stai leggendo, che riesci a capire un'opera d'arte in un'altra lingua che può essere il tedesco o anche un'altra lingua, cioè è un'emozione molto forte. In generale, studiare la lingua, anche sotto un punto di vista proprio culturale, quindi non solo la grammatica, ma proprio riuscire ad andare ad applicare quello che impari a un contesto più concreto.

Interviewer: Cioè nella vita reale no? la realtà?

Respondent: Sì, esatto.

Interviewer: Quindi nel tuo caso il fattore determinante sarebbe più un l'argomento interessante della lezione?

Respondent: Sì, in questo contesto, sì, nel senso che ovviamente per capire queste cose devi avere una base grammaticale eccetera, però secondo me è lì che inizi veramente a capire la lingua, anche a pensare in quella lingua. Quando magari focalizzi tanto sulla grammatica, diventa molto macchinoso o anche un lavoro di traduzione, che ne so. Magari parti comunque sempre pensando in italiano e poi cercando di capire come puoi dirlo in tedesco, invece quando leggi qualcosa o comunque guardi anche un film direttamente in tedesco, riesci un po' di più a entrare...

Interviewer: Sì, ad avere un contatto più autentico?

Respondent: Esatto, quindi cioè è interessante anche andare un po' oltre la semplice base grammaticale che ti dà la lingua e poi poter appunto utilizzare in maniera un po' più concreta la lingua.

Interviewer: Sì certo. Quindi, sempre su questo argomento, quali pensi siano state le principali fonti o i principali fattori che hanno reso piacevole questa esperienza? cioè, quale pensi sia stata la ragione o le ragioni che l'hanno resa un'esperienza positiva? Mi hai parlato già sull'argomento della poesia e la letteratura che ti piaceva molto.

Respondent: Sì, secondo me è molto importante avere un'insegnante che, come nel mio caso, cerca anche proprio di entrare un po' in contatto con gli studenti, che è una cosa che forse adesso all'università un po' si perde, forse appunto per come è strutturata l'università. I professori tendono a essere un po' più distanti dagli studenti, però comunque un'insegnante che riesce o sa trasmetterti quella... non so, quel senso di... come dire...

Interviewer: Forse l'interesse, la passione?

Respondent: Esatto, esatto, che riesce proprio a trasmetterti sentimenti positivi, che è una cosa che soprattutto negli anni delle superiori ho sentito molto.

Interviewer: Ok. Quindi l'altra domanda è: se uno dei tuoi amici ti chiedesse qual è la tua cosa preferita delle lezioni di tedesco, cosa gli diresti?

Respondent: Allora potrebbe essere il fatto, come dicevo anche prima, di poterti mettere in gioco assumendo una prospettiva totalmente diversa sul modo di pensare perché essendo una lingua che ha tante regole grammaticali molto diverse dalle nostre è un po' più

impegnativa anche. Perché comunque magari ci sono altre lingue, per esempio, lo spagnolo che non è giusto dire che sia uguale all'italiano, perché non lo è per niente, però comunque se tu senti una persona spagnola parlare senza conoscerlo, senza conoscere la lingua, bene o male, riesce a capire. Il tedesco invece diventa molto più impegnativo, quindi devi proprio cambiare la prospettiva, metterti proprio a pensare in maniera totalmente diversa, quindi anche in un certo senso, una sfida personale, anche un po' più significativa.

Interviewer: Certo, quello sì. Perfetto, andiamo adesso su un altro tema: potresti fornire qualche dettaglio sul tuo rapporto con i tuoi docenti e con i compagni di classe. Qualche commento generale va bene.

Respondent: Alle superiori magari anche l'insegnante era un attimo più connessa con gli studenti, quindi c'era anche più un rapporto personale. Mentre all'università questo si va un po' a perdere.

Interviewer: Comunque siete una classe numerosa?

Respondent: Saremo una ventina, forse quindi siamo anche molto pochi ed è una cosa che in un certo senso mi dispiace perché forse c'è poca partecipazione. Quindi è un po' difficile instaurare anche una conversazione, perché in generale anche da parte di noi studenti c'è poca collaborazione da questo punto di vista e a maggior ragione essendo in pochi diventa un po' più difficile instaurare questo tipo di conversazione. Comunque noi al momento stiamo lavorando più che altro sulla grammatica, quindi forse è più facile interagire di più quando si sta effettivamente discutendo di un tema concreto e non semplicemente della grammatica...

Interviewer: Diciamo che non ci sono molte opportunità per avere un legame più stretto.

Respondent: Sì, esatto, perché la grammatica è più 'mi spieghi la regola, si fanno gli esercizi' e quindi rimane almeno in questa fase poco spazio per la conversazione vera e propria. Però comunque anche solo nelle occasioni in cui ci chiede di lavorare in piccoli gruppi o a coppie, diciamo magari ci dà una consegna, di parlare comunque di qualcosa, quindi instaurare una conversazione tra di noi, in quel caso forse diventa un po' più attiva la questione, quindi con i compagni diventa forse più semplice.

Interviewer: Quindi questo non succede spesso da quello che ho capito a lezione, no?

Respondent: In questa fase non succede molto spesso, forse perché adesso in particolare stiamo lavorando sulla grammatica, però magari in una parte successiva del corso dovremmo anche iniziare a spaziare un po' di più anche su altri aspetti.

Interviewer: Certo. Allora, in che modo pensi che la lezione di tedesco potrebbe essere più piacevole? Ad esempio: se potessi forse cambiare o aggiungere una cosa per rendere le tue lezioni tedesco più piacevoli, quale sarebbe?

Respondent: Potrebbe essere molto utile trovare per ogni lezione un piccolo tema di cui parlare, magari legato all'attualità, che permetta di utilizzare le competenze che acquisiamo, ovviamente durante le varie lezioni, per esprimere dei concetti più concreti, anche i nostri sentimenti o magari le nostre opinioni riguardo a quello che sta succedendo nel mondo. Quindi avere magari anche un approccio di questo tipo. Anche lo studio della grammatica della lingua ha delle applicazioni più concrete che stiamo facendo in un

certo senso, però sempre in una maniera piuttosto limitata. Anche il lavoro di gruppo secondo me aiuta a allegare con i compagni, magari sparisce un po' quella paura di mettersi in gioco. Perché forse quando sei direttamente di fronte all'insegnante sei anche un po' più timoroso, lo vedi come una figura più distante. Invece i colleghi sono comunque i tuoi pari, siamo più o meno tutti sullo stesso livello e quindi diventa anche più semplice e ovviamente più piacevole anche l'apprendimento. Quindi avere più possibilità durante la lezione di confrontarsi con i compagni di corso potrebbe essere un modo per rendere un po' più viva la situazione.

Interviewer: Certamente, perché l'interazione con i compagni diciamo che è anche un uso autentico della lingua. Bene, siamo quasi alla fine. Vorresti aggiungere qualcosa?

Respondent: Un'altra cosa che mi viene in mente potrebbe essere provare a spiegare gli argomenti attraverso del materiale interattivo, quindi magari dei video o dei piccoli giochi che possono rendere più divertente l'apprendimento e non solo la memorizzazione di regole che vanno poi applicate. Quindi usare del materiale che ti permetta di imparare anche un nuovo lessico, non solo la grammatica, ma anche il lessico e come queste cose si possono utilizzare nella vita quotidiana. Quello potrebbe essere più piacevole perché ti fa capire poi il senso di quello che stai studiando, quindi non stai studiando una cosa così fine a se stessa, ma un qualcosa che poi ha una propria applicazione pratica.

Interviewer: Una lingua, una cultura completa.

Respondent: Esatto, soprattutto arricchire con delle caratteristiche proprie della cultura che quindi ti mettono direttamente in contatto con essa. Secondo me la parte più interessante, cioè quello che aiuta molto a entrare in contatto con una lingua, è proprio cercare dei punti di contatto con la cultura, come la poesia o anche la musica. Sono cose che aiutano molto ad apprendere meglio la lingua, quindi integrare questi elementi all'interno delle lezioni potrebbe essere utile, a mio parere.

Interviewer: Sì, assolutamente, anch'io sono d'accordo, va bene, quindi abbiamo finito. Grazie mille per il tuo aiuto e il tuo tempo.

Respondent: Di nulla, buona serata! Ciao!

Interviewer: Grazie nuovamente, ciao!

TRANSCRIPT – INTERVIEW 2

Interviewee: MR, female

Date: 12/12/2022

Duration: 00:21:33

Interviewer: Ciao, benvenuta. Innanzitutto grazie per la tua partecipazione a questa intervista. Come puoi sicuramente capire dal mio accento, io non sono madrelingua italiana, quindi dimmi se in qualsiasi momento non capisci qualcosa o hai bisogno di chiarimenti.

- Respondent:** Ok.
- Interviewer:** Prima di farti le domande, ti spiego un po'. Ci sono 7 domande in totale. Ad eccezione delle prime due domande, tutte le altre sono sempre focalizzate su quali emozioni o sentimenti hai provato nella situazione in questione. Ecco, sarebbe tutto. Hai qualche domanda?
- Respondent:** Va bene così.
- Interviewer:** Ok, perfetto, quindi iniziamo. Dimmi, qual è il tuo corso di studi e in che anno sei?
- Respondent:** Il mio corso di studi si chiama scienze del linguaggio, è un corso magistrale. Sono alla fine del secondo anno. Ho concluso tutte le lezioni. Nel secondo anno sto scrivendo la tesi, quindi sono ancora in corso.
- Interviewer:** Bene. Da quando studi il tedesco e perché hai scelto di studiare questa lingua?
- Respondent:** Studio il tedesco dalle medie, quindi 13 anni e inizialmente ho scelto di studiare la lingua perché era obbligatoria per quanto riguarda medie, superiori. Mentre poi c'è stato un cambiamento all'interno della mia visione del tedesco, perché inizialmente era una lingua che non mi piaceva perché non me l'hanno mai fatta piacere. C'era un bruttissimo clima in classe, orribile. Poi, è successo un cambiamento l'ultimo anno delle superiori. Ho avuto una docente veramente molto brava, che aveva creato un bellissimo clima in classe e aveva proprio reso bella la lingua e ho deciso che anch'io avrei voluto creare quello che aveva fatto lei, quindi rendere il tedesco bello per gli altri. Per questo motivo ho deciso di studiarlo poi qui adesso all'università per poterlo insegnare, quindi poter insegnare il tedesco agli altri.
- Interviewer:** Bello, complimenti. Quindi, vorrei anche sapere se hai mai vissuto una situazione che ti è piaciuta particolarmente, che ti ha fatto piacere o che ti ha fatto provare un senso di realizzazione durante le tue lezioni di tedesco? C'è un evento o un'esperienza che ricordi?
- Respondent:** In realtà sì, più di uno. Ne posso dire una qualunque o...?
- Interviewer:** Sì, va bene uno o più di uno, l'importante è descriverlo in dettaglio questo episodio e anche le emozioni o sentimenti che hai provato in generale.
- Respondent:** Certo. È stato proprio all'università, secondo anno e eravamo comunque un gruppetto relativamente piccolo, quindi massimo eravamo in classe 15 persone. Ci conoscevamo già, quindi eravamo un gruppo affiatato e ci trovavamo bene gli uni con gli altri, non c'era ansia o un clima teso. L'insegnante era una madrelingua e c'è aveva proposto di fare un'attività particolare, ovvero di ascoltare un video in cui c'erano delle persone che parlavano fra di loro sul tema dell'ambiente. Il punto principale era che parlavano in dialetto e il fatto che parlassero in dialetto era una cosa che non avevamo mai trattato, mai visto. Quindi inizialmente eravamo tutti un pochino spaventati e io in primis anche perché non l'avevo mai ascoltato, per esempio un bavarese parlare quindi ero sopraffatta dalla situazione e pensavo che non sarei mai riuscita a capire assolutamente niente.
- Interviewer:** Sì, mi immagino.

Respondent: E invece, grazie al fatto che ci avesse preparato comunque delle domande che andavano a seguire l'ordine di quello che avrebbero detto durante questa loro conversazione, mi sono trovata alla fine anche sorpresa di essere riuscita a capire quello di cui stavano parlando, anche perché comunque era un tema che avevamo già visto e trattato come discorso fra di noi. È stato proprio a livello di realizzazione personale, cioè mi sono sentita proprio realizzata perché appunto non mi aspettavo di riuscire a capire. E nonostante il livello alto di tedesco, anche queste specifiche particolarità della lingua. Subito dopo aver fatto questa attività, la prof ha deciso di farci parlare fra di noi sempre sullo stesso tema e anche qui all'inizio eravamo un po' incerti perché comunque hai appena ascoltato persone parlare di un tema abbastanza delicato, in certi parti. Già non è a volte semplicissimo esprimere la propria opinione, in più devi farlo in lingua e con la prof che ti osserva, a volte non è sempre... ecco, ti senti sempre un po' giudicata. Invece in quel caso aveva lei iniziato a parlare, aveva subito detto Lei: 'questa è la mia opinione' e da lì una persona ha iniziato a parlare di quello che pensava lei, dopo ciascuno... proprio ti senti la voglia di parlare, buttarti e esprimere quello che pensi. Quindi proprio il modo anche della prof di farci sentire a nostro agio di fronte ad un'attività che magari è proprio metterti davanti a tutti gli altri e parlare, un'attività che potrebbe essere un po' problematica, ci ha messi a nostro agio, facendo appunto lei il primo passo.

Interviewer: Certo, l'ha fatto prima lei e poi vi siete sentiti incoraggiati.

Respondent: Esatto, esatto. Questo è stato un episodio che mi ha fatto dire 'caspita! riesco proprio a mettere in azione quello che ho imparato in questi anni, anche di fronte ad una parlata diversa' e una situazione magari un pochino così di ansia, anche perché sai, non si sa mai quello che potrebbe avere come effetto, quello che stai dicendo.

Interviewer: Sì, sì, assolutamente. Poi c'è un altro episodio? mi pare che avevi detto che ne avevi due.

Interviewer: Sì, ce ne sarebbe anche un altro. Era un'attività che abbiamo fatto ed era basata su una sorta di *role play*. In questo caso era un'altra prof e ci aveva diviso in piccoli gruppetti scelti da noi. Quindi ci aveva proprio lasciati liberi, non c'erano spinte dall'esterno di mettersi con magari persone con cui non ci si trovava d'accordo, con cui non si aveva un legame, quindi proprio molto liberi. E in questo contesto ci ha fatto fare tipo delle micro scenette con un pezzetto di carta con un disegno, quindi non c'erano parole date da lei, non c'era nulla. Su questi disegni, per esempio, a me era capitato il disegnetto di un aspirapolvere. Allora da lì nel nostro gruppetto ci eravamo messi d'accordo bene, adesso noi siamo all'interno di un negozio e ho necessità di comprare questo oggetto e cerchiamo di fare un dialogo. Quindi avevamo proprio instaurato questa relazione, questa conversazione e il lato positivo era che comunque poi, mentre noi parlavamo, c'era la prof che passava fra i banchi, fra i nostri progetti come eravamo messi. E non c'aveva detto: 'adesso vi alzate di fronte alla classe e parlate davanti a tutti con tutti che vi guardano, cioè rimanete pure seduti e io passo'. Quindi c'era lei che passava ascoltando, si fermava, ma comunque non era un modo inquisitorio, era molto tranquillo, poi se c'erano dubbi potevamo chiederle, ci sentivamo proprio a nostro agio come se fosse l'amico a cui chiedi: 'cavolo, non mi ricordo la parola, tu la ricordi?'. E quindi è proprio questo rapporto molto di vicinanza con la prof, non come 'oh mio Dio, devo chiedere ad una persona che sicuro, poi chissà che cosa penserà di me, perché non ricordo le parole o come dire questa cosa'. Questo proprio mi ha fatto dire: 'cavolo, cioè riesci anche a cavartela in un contesto improvvisato, basato proprio così, su quello che pensi al momento'.

- Interviewer:** Quindi è stata una cosa molto tranquilla.
- Respondent:** Sì, sì, anche perché non sentivi nemmeno il tempo passare, è passato velocissimo perché stai facendo qualcosa che è diverso dal solito e che ti invogliava anche perché poteva essere una reale situazione.
- Interviewer:** Effettivamente, sì, sì, quello sì. E anche perché era un esercizio orale, un uso della lingua...
- Respondent:** Assolutamente sì, non ci aveva fatto scrivere niente, non voleva che ci prendessimo appunti, era tutto subito di getto orale.
- Interviewer:** Sono contenta che tu abbia avuto questi tipi di sperienze positive. Allora, prossima domanda. Quali pensi siano state le principali fonti o i principali fattori che hanno reso piacevole questa esperienza? anche se forse mi hai già detto qualcosa, forse vorresti approfondire ancora un po'.
- Respondent:** La prima cosa che mi viene in mente, così di getto, era proprio il clima che c'era in classe. Proprio il clima sereno e rilassato. Non c'era ansia, non c'era pressione, non c'era questo senso di 'sei sotto indagine, siamo qui a guardarti e giudicarti, segneremo tutto quello che dirai di sbagliato'. C'era un clima tranquillo, una conversazione come fra amici che parlano di qualcosa, però in un'altra lingua. Quindi in questo modo usavi un po' esempi di lingua piuttosto autentici, se non penso proprio al video di questi tedeschi che parlavano nei loro dialetti. Però queste sono le cose principali, appunto perché i miei compagni erano molto... cioè c'era un bel rapporto, un bel legame, quindi una sensazione molto piacevoli. Non c'era veramente ansia, non c'era la paura del giudizio degli altri.
- Interviewer:** Diciamo che tutto rilassato e potevate pensare tranquillamente, concentrarvi.
- Respondent:** Sì, sì, anche perché ci potevamo aiutare fra di noi. Cioè non c'era quella competizione del 'io voglio fare meglio di te'. C'era proprio un clima di 'siamo tutti uguali, magari tu sei più bravo, magari mi dai una mano su questa parola che proprio non ricordo o come dire meglio questa frase che io direi troppo in maniera italiana rispetto alla versione tedesca.'
- Interviewer:** E anche questa figura dell'insegnante che hai accennato, l'insegnante disponibile.
- Respondent:** L'insegnante non si è mai messo proprio al di sopra come entità suprema, anzi si metteva proprio al nostro livello e parlava con noi sempre dandoci comunque del lei in maniera formale. Ma lo faceva in un modo che non era comunque aggressivo, non ti sentivi giudicato, non ti sentivi inferiore, era proprio un livello tranquillo, classico, cioè quel distacco perché ok, insegnante, comunque alunno, però non a livello eccessivo.
- Interviewer:** Bene, grazie. Quindi la prossima domanda è: se uno dei tuoi amici ti chiedesse qual è la tua cosa preferita delle lezioni di tedesco, cosa gli diresti?
- Respondent:** Se penso alla parte di lettorato, quindi di noi che usiamo la lingua, direi le conversazioni che c'erano ad ogni singola lezione fatte fra di noi compagni. Infatti ogni volta che la prof ci proponeva un argomento, anche in maniera generale, a volte

soltanto presentandoci un suo episodio. Magari aveva fatto ritardo con il treno e ci diceva: 'oh, caspita, questi mezzi sono sempre in ritardo, a voi è mai successo?' Sì, ovvio che è successo e quindi ne parlavamo fra di noi, ma il bello era che comunque si iniziava, 'potete parlarne tranquillamente proprio fra di voi, come gruppo o piccoli gruppetti in coppia' e lei passava fra di noi, ci ascoltava, magari si segnava qualcosa o si ricordava qualcosa che poi scriveva alla lavagna, tipo un bel errore, ma tutto comunque molto tranquillo e proprio un bello scambio.

Interviewer: Quindi nelle tue lezioni c'era sempre una parte dedicata alla lingua parlata?

Respondent: Sì, sì alla conversazione, proprio anche molto libera e spontanea. Non c'era preparazione prima o altro. Era proprio molto di getto.

Interviewer: Benissimo. Mi hai già parlato sui tuoi docenti e i compagni di classe, quindi ti chiedo adesso in che modo pensi che la lezione di tedesco potrebbe essere più piacevole? Ad esempio: se potessi forse cambiare o aggiungere una cosa per rendere le tue lezioni tedesco più piacevoli, quale sarebbe?

Respondent: Allora, in realtà forse due, perché da una parte direi aggiungere più elementi autentici, a volte meno affidamento sul testo e più video come quelli che abbiamo visto, oppure più filmati. Anche ascoltare una canzone che finora non abbiamo mai fatto, secondo me sarebbe stato invece molto bello, perché avremmo potuto anche conoscere qualcosa, magari sul cantante, una frase che ha un elemento culturale dentro e analizzarlo. Questo mi sarebbe piaciuto moltissimo. Perché appunto ti cali ancora meglio all'interno, perché poi andando a parlare con un tedesco magari esce l'argomento. Allora sarebbe bello anche capire meglio quello di cui stai parlando. Quindi secondo me un pochino più di attività autentiche, proprio vera lingua, cioè oltre alla prof che parla, lei da madrelingua, anche proprio altri esempi di lingua.

Interviewer: Certamente, forse un pochino più della parte culturale.

Respondent: Esatto. Poi un'altra cosa, però questo l'ho riscontrata solamente con una persona. Era più giudicante nei nostri confronti. Avrei voluto una comunicazione fra lo studente e l'insegnante all'interno della lezione in un modo sereno, pacifico, perché gli errori comunque possono esistere.

Interviewer: Forse usare altre parole, correggere in altra maniera. Queste cose sono sempre importanti a livello affettivo.

Respondent: Esatto, correggere tipo 'ok, hai fatto questo errore, prova a farlo diversamente?' Perché sicuramente ha avuto un effetto negativo, ho visto sia da me che anche da altri compagni che nell'andare a lezione avevamo proprio zero motivazione, zero voglia, assolutamente nulla, perché sapevamo a cosa saremmo andati incontro. E insomma, non è stato la cosa più bella ma, ripeto, è stato limitato quindi ho detto boh.

Interviewer: Certamente diverso da quello che mi hai raccontato sulle tue esperienze con altri insegnanti. Bene, abbiamo finito. Grazie mille per il tuo aiuto e il tuo tempo.

Respondent: Di nulla, grazie altrettanto, buona serata, ciao!

Interviewer: Buona serata! Ciao!

TRANSCRIPT – INTERVIEW 3

Interviewee: BR, female

Date: 14/12/2022

Duration: 00:14:19

Interviewer: Ciao, benvenuta. Innanzitutto grazie per la tua partecipazione a questa intervista. Come puoi sicuramente capire dal mio accento, io non sono madrelingua italiana, quindi dimmi se in qualsiasi momento non capisci qualcosa o hai bisogno di chiarimenti.

Respondent: Ok.

Interviewer: Prima di farti le domande, ti spiego un po'. Ci sono 7 domande in totale. Ad eccezione delle prime due domande, tutte le altre sono sempre focalizzate su quali emozioni o sentimenti hai provato nella situazione in questione. Ecco, sarebbe tutto. Hai qualche domanda?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Ok, perfetto, quindi iniziamo. Dimmi, qual è il tuo corso di studi e in che anno sei?

Respondent: Sono di lingue e letterature straniere all'Unibo. Ho finito il terzo anno, ci sono ancora in corso, mi dovrei laureare a marzo.

Interviewer: Bene. Da quando studi il tedesco?

Respondent: Ho iniziato il primo anno di università, quindi tre anni.

Interviewer: Benissimo. E perché hai scelto di studiare questa lingua?

Respondent: Avevo studiato spagnolo alle medie e mi era piaciuto, però volevo provare qualcosa di diverso. Non lo so, mi sembrava una sfida, non volevo una lingua romanza perché troppo simile all'italiano, forse.

Interviewer: Sì, certo. Quindi hai mai vissuto una situazione che ti è piaciuta particolarmente durante le tue lezioni di tedesco? O forse che ti ha fatto piacere o che ti ha fatto provare un senso di realizzazione sempre durante le tue lezioni di tedesco? C'è qualche evento o un'esperienza che ricordi?

Respondent: Sì, allora la mia prof è sempre stata molto molto disponibile. Lei faceva sempre dei sondaggi per chiederci cosa volessimo fare che ci piacesse. Quindi, ad esempio, ci chiedeva: 'che cosa volete fare?' Io spesso dicevo che mi piacerebbe ascoltare musica e lei ogni settimana portava una canzone diversa di un gruppo che pensava che ci sarebbe piaciuto, oppure delle sessioni magari di lettura di romanzi e poi comprensione sui libri che avevamo proposto noi, cioè partecipare molto di persona al processo di costruzione delle lezioni.

Interviewer: Bello, veramente. Ma c'è forse un evento o un'esperienza in particolare che ricordi?

Respondent: A me piacevano in particolare delle lezioni tematiche che avevamo. Una in particolare, una lezione di Natale, c'eravamo connessi su zoom perché c'era ancora il Covid e avevamo tutti lo sfondo della videochiamata, uno sfondo natalizio e avevamo parlato per tutta la lezione del Natale in Germania, com'è diverso dal Natale in Italia e tutto il lessico.

Interviewer: Benissimo, allora ti chiedo quali pensi siano state le principali fonti o i principali fattori che hanno reso piacevole questa esperienza?

Respondent: Sicuramente il fatto che fossero interattive, quindi che la prof tenesse in considerazione i nostri interessi, le lezioni erano fatte su misura per noi. Lei si preoccupava di cosa piacesse a noi e quindi poi lo metteva in atto. Se li avessimo proposto qualcosa di diverso, le lezioni sarebbero state tutt'altre. Erano proprio fatte su misura per noi, però forse era possibile solo perché eravamo in 4. In teoria il gruppo era da tipo 15 persone, però poi sotto Natale, poi su zoom e il Covid, quindi eravamo tre studenti più la prof. Però, anche quando eravamo tipo 8 o 10, comunque cercava di seguire tutti gli interessi del gruppo. Magari una lezione quello di uno studente, una lezione quella dello studente dopo però comunque cercava di coinvolgere tutti, quindi sicuramente questo.

Interviewer: E facevi più lingua parlata o più, per esempio, esercizi di scrittura o di ascolto?

Respondent: Esercizi di scrittura raramente, spesso segnava dei compiti da inviare per email, spesso una parte di grammatica si vedeva dalla conversazione. A lezione forse c'era più la lingua parlata, cioè ovvio era anche un po' complicato perché siamo in 10 e poi dobbiamo parlare tutti, però la prof faceva parlare noi. Dipende molto, a volte cercava di tirarci fuori lei il lessico, per esempio: 'quali parole conoscete legate al Natale?' E tutti iniziavano: 'so che questa parola vuol dire questo', 'io conosco questa tradizione', 'io so questa parola'. Quindi tipo *'active recalling'*. Oppure a volte doveva per forza insegnare gli argomenti di grammatica per cui le solite tabelle, il congiuntivo, però poi magari si facevano delle frasi per inserire la forma corretta di congiuntivo, ma magari c'era un elemento lessicale che non conoscevamo e diceva: 'sapete cos'è questa cosa?' E da lì veniva fuori la conversazione su altri elementi che magari non conoscevamo, parentesi di cultura.

Interviewer: Bene, quindi diresti che c'era un'atmosfera positiva e piacevole in classe?

Respondent: Sì, decisamente.

Interviewer: Bene, grazie. Quindi la prossima domanda è: se uno dei tuoi amici ti chiedesse qual è la tua cosa preferita delle lezioni di tedesco, cosa gli diresti?

Respondent: Per me era la prof. Perché secondo me era proprio la migliore che abbia mai avuto. Veramente spettacolare perché si prendeva cura dei nostri bisogni personali per imparare la lingua e quindi sicuramente quello poi creava anche una sorta di spirito competitivo. Però non era tossico nel senso che ci metteva uno contro l'altro, però premiava molto, senza mai scoraggiare chi magari non si ricordava il significato di qualcosa o senza chiamarci fuori uno per uno. Tipo 'tu ti ricordi cosa vuol dire questa cosa? No? Chi se lo ricorda?' Quindi non si sentiva neanche *'singled-out'*. Anche perché il primo anno invece avevo un'altra prof che era tutt'altro e infatti io piangevo in classe.

Interviewer: Oh no, però almeno hai avuto un'esperienza positiva con quest'altra prof. Quindi prossima domanda: potresti fornire dettagli sul tuo rapporto con i tuoi docenti e i tuoi compagni di classe? Su questo mi hai già parlato, non so se vuoi aggiungere qualcosa?

Respondent: Sì, cioè grazie alla prof abbiamo anche stretto delle amicizie in classiche, secondo me altrimenti non sarebbero successe proprio il fatto di creare dei gruppi. Infatti adesso abbiamo un gruppo di lettura con tutti gli ex alunni, con la prof che ci vediamo una volta al mese fuori da scuola solo per rimanere in contatto, quindi veramente bellissimo. È stata bravissima lei a creare un gruppo spettacolare come prof.

Interviewer: Veramente bravissima. Allora, ultima domanda: in che modo pensi che la lezione di tedesco potrebbe essere più piacevole? Ad esempio: se potessi forse cambiare o aggiungere una cosa per rendere le tue lezioni di tedesco più piacevoli, quale sarebbe?

Respondent: Forse sarebbe stato bello imparare più lessico, perché sono andata poi in Erasmus in Austria e poi sono andata anche a vivere in Germania due mesi e mi sono trovata molto in difficoltà. Il lessico è sempre un po' un problema, secondo me, perché si tende a insegnare troppa grammatica, però forse anche poche ore, due ore alla settimana non sono praticamente niente. Sono andata a lavorare al McDonalds in Austria e non sapevo dire tovagliolo, cannuccia. Nei corsi all'università il lessico è un po' fatto su misura, molto semplicemente chiedi alla prof cosa vuol dire e lei rassicurava molto però poi nella vita reale diventa un po' un problema, era la parte più complicata.

Interviewer: Certamente. Bene, abbiamo finito. Grazie mille per il tuo aiuto e il tuo tempo, sei stata gentilissima.

Respondent: Grazie a te, questo è il tuo progetto di laurea giusto? Secondo me è molto interessante che tu faccia una tesi su queste cose.

Interviewer: Sì, anche penso che sia molto importante farlo con una lingua come il tedesco che di solito è associata con pregiudizi o nozioni negative invece di positive. Quindi mi sembra importante sapere cosa funziona bene a lezione per poter continuare o migliorare. Quella è l'idea.

Respondent: Benissimo, grazie mille, buona serata, ciao!

Interviewer: Buona serata! Ciao!

TRANSCRIPT – INTERVIEW 4

Interviewee: MY, female

Date: 14/12/2022

Duration: 00:19:00

Interviewer: Ciao, benvenuta. Innanzitutto grazie per la tua partecipazione a questa intervista. Come puoi sicuramente capire dal mio accento, io non sono madrelingua italiana,

quindi dimmi se in qualsiasi momento non capisci qualcosa o hai bisogno di chiarimenti.

Respondent: Ok.

Interviewer: Prima di farti le domande, ti spiego un po'. Ci sono 7 domande in totale. Ad eccezione delle prime due domande, tutte le altre sono sempre focalizzate su quali emozioni o sentimenti hai provato nella situazione in questione. Ecco, hai qualche domanda?

Respondent: No, adesso no, grazie.

Interviewer: Ok, perfetto, quindi iniziamo. Dimmi, qual è il tuo corso di studi e in che anno sei?

Respondent: Sono al terzo anno di lingue e letterature straniere all'Università di Bologna.

Interviewer: Bene. Da quando studi il tedesco?

Respondent: Io l'ho fatto alle medie per tre anni. Non a Bologna, a Bergamo, che sono nata lì e poi all'università quindi in totale sei anni circa.

Interviewer: Ok, perfetto. E perché hai scelto di studiare questa lingua?

Respondent: Non so se hai presente lo stereotipo della lingua tedesca, tutti dicono: 'ah, ma che brutta lingua, ma come suona male'. Soprattutto dicono sempre che, per esempio, il francese suona molto dolce, invece il tedesco molto severo. Io non ero d'accordo per niente. Perché quei tre anni alle medie mi era piaciuto tantissimo e non ho proseguito al liceo con le lingue, però era sempre qualcosa che mi era rimasta in testa. Il tedesco è una bella lingua e poi niente, ho deciso di studiarlo meglio all'università e voglio un po' far capire alla gente che non è così brutta come lingua, anzi.

Interviewer: Sì, ti capisco, anche per me è una bella lingua veramente. Quindi, hai mai vissuto una situazione che ti è piaciuta particolarmente durante le tue lezioni di tedesco? O forse che ti ha fatto piacere o che ti ha fatto provare un senso di gratificazione, sempre durante le tue lezioni di tedesco? C'è qualche evento o un'esperienza che ricordi?

Respondent: Diciamo che non sono mai stata la peggiore studentessa, ma nemmeno la migliore. Ero un po' nella media. Però, quando la professoressa faceva una domanda a tutta la classe e io magari avevo il coraggio di dire qualcosa che poi si rivelava giusto, mi sentivo molto in pace con me stessa, quindi nel senso: 'so qualcosa', in verità, niente di gigante o grandioso. Sono anche una persona abbastanza timida che non parla tanto, però quando ricevevo complimenti per come mi esprimevo in tedesco, mi sentivo molto bene. La mia professoressa all'università è molto, molto gentile e incoraggia molto i suoi studenti a parlare e a sbagliare soprattutto. Io ho passato un anno e mezzo in pandemia all'università e cioè...

Interviewer: Avevi lezioni online o in presenza?

Respondent: In presenza, scusi, online proprio per un anno intero, il secondo anno di università. Era molto difficile stare dietro la scuola, con lo studio delle lingue in particolare, perché un conto è studiare qualcosa di teorico, ma per le lingue mi mancava molto la motivazione. Però la nostra professoressa faceva di tutto pur di farci interessare e mi ricordo in particolare... Io, oltre a studiare lingue, sono anche una grande

appassionata di videogiochi e la mia professoressa, senza che lo sapesse, ha trovato questo programma su Internet che rendeva quasi un videogioco l'apprendimento del tedesco. Gli appunti erano un po' come i videogiochi e mi ricordo che ero molto più motivata a impararlo, perché volevo raccogliere i punti. Insomma, mi ha molto motivato a studiare il tedesco durante la pandemia.

Interviewer: E la tua prof ha usato questo durante tutte le lezioni o solo frequentemente?

Respondent: Non tutte le lezioni, però quando avevamo fatto un grosso argomento e dovevamo fare un esercizio di ripasso, lei usava questo metodo.

Interviewer: Interessante. Allora ti chiedo quali pensi siano state le principali fonti o i principali fattori che hanno reso piacevole la tua esperienza? Cioè, quale pensi sia stata la ragione o le ragioni che hanno reso questa una esperienza positiva? Mi hai detto già che la lezione era un po' come un videogioco. Pensi che ci siano anche altri fattori??

Respondent: Allora io so che i miei compagni se la vivevano molto peggio lo studio del tedesco perché sì, gli piaceva, ma non così tanto. Però a me è sempre piaciuto tanto e la mia professoressa è sempre stata estremamente gentile, veramente incoraggiante nell'insegnare la lingua. Sono stata fortunata perché io ho avuto la combinazione del 'mi piace il tedesco più ho una brava professoressa'. Io non dico che il mio tedesco sia molto buono oggi, però so che è perché sono timida, è per quello però...

Interviewer: Però ti sei divertita, cioè ti è piaciuto come esperienza?

Respondent: Sì, sì, cioè mi è piaciuto imparare il tedesco e sono molto contenta di aver fatto questa scelta nella mia vita.

Interviewer: Bene, complimenti. E quindi, per quanto riguarda la lingua parlata e gli argomenti a lezione, come ti sei trovata?

Respondent: La prof parlava solo in tedesco, tranne quando doveva spiegare qualcosa di specifico. In italiano solo quando doveva spiegare una definizione di grammatica che è un po' più complicato, cioè voleva assicurarsi che noi capissimo e anche noi dovevamo rispondere in tedesco. Per quanto riguarda gli argomenti, purtroppo la maggior parte era grammatica, articoli, verbi, coniugazioni... però c'erano anche elementi di cultura tedesca, di curiosità, non tanto però, verso la fine degli ultimi dieci minuti della lezione. Per il resto era grammatica, esercizi, grammatica, esercizi.

Interviewer: Quindi quello che hai imparato col videogioco era anche grammatica?

Respondent: Sì, era grammatica, lessico, tipo metti l'articolo giusto per questa frase e ti dava punti.

Interviewer: Bene, grazie. Quindi la prossima domanda è: se uno dei tuoi amici ti chiedesse qual è la tua cosa preferita delle lezioni di tedesco, cosa gli diresti?

Respondent: Per me è l'aver l'occasione di parlare in tedesco perché ho sempre il desiderio di parlarlo, ma nessuno che mi capisce, ovviamente. Poter parlare con i miei compagni o con la mia professoressa mi rendeva felice, perché sicuramente non posso parlarlo con la mia famiglia però avere la possibilità proprio di riuscire a parlare in tedesco era la parte che mi piaceva di più dalla lezione.

Interviewer: Bene. Quindi prossima domanda: potresti fornire dettagli sul tuo rapporto con i tuoi docenti e i tuoi compagni di classe? Mi hai già parlato un po' sulla tua insegnante. Non so se magari mi puoi dire qualcosa sull'atmosfera in classe.

Respondent: Sì, allora non eravamo in tantissimi in classe, però proprio grazie a questo si è creato un bel clima, ci conosciamo tutti, quindi non c'è imbarazzo nel fare errori o nel parlare tedesco. C'era sempre un'atmosfera di tranquillità, nessuno si sentiva molto agitato perché molti di solito nel parlare una lingua si sentono agitati, però noi no. In quella classe eravamo tutti molto calmi e soprattutto grazie alla professoressa che, come ho detto prima, era molto incoraggiante e anche se magari volevi dire una parola, però non ti veniva, lei cercava di darti una parola simile, così magari tu ci arrivavi e riuscivi ad arrivare alla risposta da solo e non dandoti direttamente la risposta. Per il primo anno non ho avuto una buona professoressa, solo gli ultimi due, quindi ho buoni ricordi di quello soprattutto.

Interviewer: Benissimo. Allora, ultima domanda: in che modo pensi che la lezione di tedesco potrebbe essere più piacevole? Ad esempio: se potessi forse cambiare o aggiungere una cosa per rendere le tue lezioni tedesco più piacevoli, quale sarebbe?

Respondent: Personalmente lo so che è indispensabile studiare la grammatica e fare esercizi sulla grammatica, però a volte diventa un po' faticoso e al momento non me ne vengono tantissimi in mente di modi, però cercare di implementare la grammatica all'uso delle corrette o coniugazioni, eccetera in qualcos'altro che non siano esercizi molto ripetitivi. Perché nel mio libro gli esercizi erano quasi tutti identici, abbastanza noiosi, e tradizionali. Magari durante la lezione sarebbe bello poter trovare la forma grammaticale che stiamo imparando magari nel testo di una canzone, in un film, in un video. Dimostrare come la forma grammaticale è usata e imparata nella realtà come viene effettivamente utilizzata, quello mancava.

Interviewer: Perfetto. Bene, vorresti aggiungere qualcosa in generale? Se c'è qualcosa, se non c'è, va anche bene.

Respondent: Volevo dire qualcosa più utile alla tua ricerca, ma non so se ho soddisfatto completamente le richieste.

Interviewer: No, tranquilla. L'idea è identificare cosa sta funzionando bene alle lezioni, per poter rendere più piacevole, più interessante, più utili le lezioni di tedesco per tutti, questa è l'idea.

Respondent: Mi è venuta una cosa in mente, l'ultima. La nostra professoressa, in particolare, ogni settimana ci chiedeva un feedback su come sono andate le lezioni, se proponevamo noi qualcosa interessante da fare. C'era sempre un dialogo, questa cosa mi ha fatto molto piacere perché sì, stavo imparando il tedesco, ma stavo imparando il tedesco con una persona che si interessa ai miei interessi. Il primo anno, questo non è mai successo.

Interviewer: Benissimo, allora abbiamo finito. Grazie mille per il tuo aiuto e il tuo tempo.

Respondent: Grazie per questa opportunità, è stato molto carino parlare con te, buona serata, ciao!

Interviewer: No, grazie a te, buona serata! Ciao!

TRANSCRIPT – INTERVIEW 5

Interviewee: DR, female

Date: 19/12/2022

Duration: 00:09:39

Interviewer: Ciao. Innanzitutto benvenuta e grazie per la tua partecipazione a questa intervista. Come puoi sicuramente capire dal mio accento, io non sono madrelingua italiana, quindi dimmi se in qualsiasi momento non capisci qualcosa o hai bisogno di chiarimenti.

Respondent: Va bene.

Interviewer: Prima di farti le domande, ti spiego un po'. Ci sono 7 domande in totale. Ad eccezione delle prime due domande, tutte le altre sono sempre focalizzate su quali emozioni o sentimenti hai provato nella situazione in questione. Ecco, sarebbe tutto. Hai qualche domanda?

Respondent: No, no, possiamo iniziare.

Interviewer: Ok, perfetto, quindi iniziamo. Dimmi per favore, qual è il tuo corso di studi e in che anno sei?

Respondent: Allora, io studio mediazione linguistica e sono al secondo anno.

Interviewer: Ok, perfetto. Da quando studi il tedesco?

Respondent: All'università lo studio dall'anno scorso però ho iniziato alle superiori, quindi in totale da sei anni e mezzo.

Interviewer: Perché hai scelto di studiare questa lingua? Perché il tedesco?

Respondent: Ho scelto il tedesco perché fin da piccola mi ha sempre affascinato la Germania e infatti il mio sogno più grande è quello di andare, di trasferirmi in Germania proprio e di andare a vivere lì. E poi anche il tedesco, comunque con i suoi toni abbastanza duri, mi ha sempre affascinato e ho deciso di volerlo imparare.

Interviewer: Perfetto. Hai mai vissuto una situazione che ti è piaciuta particolarmente, che ti ha fatto piacere o che ti ha fatto provare un senso di realizzazione durante le tue lezioni di tedesco? C'è un evento o un'esperienza che ricordi?

Respondent: Sì, sì, forse c'è anche più di uno. Partiamo dal primo che è stato durante una lezione alle superiori e in questa lezione dovevo fare una presentazione. Dovevamo a casa fare una ricerca su un *Bundesland* e poi esporre davanti alla classe e mi ha dato una sensazione di soddisfazione perché sono riuscita a padroneggiare alla fine una lingua non mia e soprattutto a farlo davanti a un pubblico, ossia in questo caso la classe. E poi essendo un'esercitazione con la professoressa, poi ha fatto delle domande, quindi già capire la domanda che la docente ha fatto in lingua e saper rispondere è stato molto soddisfacente.

Interviewer: Bene bene. C'è un qualche altro episodio?

- Respondent:** Sì, questo è più recente ed non è un episodio particolare, ma è molto generale. Adesso all'università facciamo delle lezioni con dei docenti madrelingua. Sono delle ore di didattica assistita e facciamo molti esercizi di grammatica e poi li correggiamo in classe. Quindi già comunque accertarsi che l'esercizio che ho svolto è corretto, significa che riesco ad applicare in pratica ciò che è la teoria, la grammatica che ho studiato.
- Interviewer:** Perfetto. La prossima domanda è quali pensi siano state le principali fonti o i principali fattori che hanno reso piacevole questa esperienza? Cioè, quale pensi sia stata la ragione o le ragioni che l'hanno resa un'esperienza positiva? Forse c'è bisogno di fare un po' di riflessione in questa parte.
- Respondent:** Riguardo la prima situazione, sicuramente è stato avere fiducia in me stessa e nei miei progressi e anche diciamo l'atmosfera che c'era in classe, mentre per quanto riguarda la seconda, comunque gli esercizi e la grammatica penso sia più la soddisfazione nel riuscire ad applicare, come ho detto prima, le regole da prima imparate, quindi applicare nella pratica le cose teoriche.
- Interviewer:** Benissimo. Quindi passiamo adesso un po' ad altre domande. Se uno dei tuoi amici ti chiedesse qual è la tua cosa preferita delle lezioni di tedesco, se ne hai una certamente, o cosa ti è piaciuto di più delle tue lezioni finora, cosa gli diresti?
- Respondent:** Penso che gli risponderi che al primo anno ci hanno fatto fare un test di piazzamento e ci hanno diviso a seconda del nostro livello di tedesco. Infatti eravamo divisi in piccoli gruppetti, principalmente in principianti, intermedi, avanzati. E in questo modo, essendo un piccolo gruppo, tutti ci conoscevamo e non avevamo paura del giudizio degli altri, in quanto eravamo tutti sullo stesso livello.
- Interviewer:** Quindi, diresti che per questo c'era un'atmosfera positiva in classe?
- Respondent:** Sì, probabilmente sia per questo. In ogni caso però questo sicuramente ad aiutato.
- Interviewer:** Bene. E quindi prossima domanda, potresti fornire qualche dettaglio sul tuo rapporto con i tuoi docenti e con i compagni di classe. Qualche commento generale va bene. Mi hai detto già qualcosa sui compagni di classe, forse potresti aggiungere anche qualcosa sui tuoi docenti.
- Respondent:** Sui compagni di classe posso dire, oltre a tutto ciò che ho detto prima, si può aggiungere il fatto che abbiamo tutti lo stesso scopo, mentre alle superiori magari tendevamo soltanto a passare la verifica o il compito scritto. Adesso invece vogliamo comunque capire e imparare, vogliamo sapere le cose e il ragionamento che sta dietro. Mentre per quanto riguarda i docenti e il rapporto che ho con loro, sono molto disponibili tutti i docenti, comunque ho un rapporto un po' più stretto con i docenti della didattica assistita, in quanto le lezioni non sono frontali ma sono più interattive. Quindi parliamo e c'è un riscontro. Mentre invece le lezioni di lingua teorica sono proprio più frontali.
- Interviewer:** Perfetto e quindi prossima domanda, in che modo pensi che la lezione di tedesco potrebbe essere più piacevole? Ad esempio: se potessi forse cambiare o aggiungere una cosa per rendere le tue lezioni tedesco più piacevoli, quale sarebbe?

- Respondent:** Probabilmente una cosa che secondo me manca è la parte di traduzioni. Infatti noi le facciamo soltanto nell'ora di grammatica. Dedichiamo una parte alla traduzione, però secondo me sarebbe più piacevole magari avere un'ora dedicata soltanto a quello.
- Interviewer:** Quindi voi fate una piccola parte della lezione sui traduzioni? E d'altra parte la grammatica?
- Respondent:** Probabilmente perché siamo al secondo anno, magari al terzo si dedicherà di più alla traduzione, però secondo me anche già da adesso bisognerebbe investire sulla traduzione.
- Interviewer:** Ok, vorrei anche chiedere se avete un parte dedicata a la lingua parlata o forse alla cultura a lezione? O forse non ci sono?
- Respondent:** Non ci sono perché faccio il corso di letteratura. Dato che studio lingue, letterature e mediazione culturale, ho il corso di lingua che è quello di cui ho parlato fino adesso e poi il corso di letteratura. Quindi sono divise e sono proprio due esami diversi.
- Interviewer:** Grazie per i chiarimenti. Bene, vuoi aggiungere qualcosa di quello che abbiamo già parlato? Forse se ti ricordi qualcosa da aggiungere, sennò va bene così.
- Respondent:** No, penso di aver detto tutto.
- Interviewer:** Benissimo, allora abbiamo finito. Grazie mille per il tuo aiuto e il tuo tempo. Buona serata!
- Respondent:** Va bene, buona fortuna per la laurea e buona serata! Ciao!
- Interviewer:** Grazie, grazie, ciao!