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***EFL Enjoyment of Saudi English Majors and its Relation  
to their Achievement, Autonomy and Self-Efficacy***

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**Abstract:**

This study explored the level and sources of EFL enjoyment among 120 Saudi college English majors. It also explored gender differences in EFL enjoyment and the correlation of EFL enjoyment with achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy. Students completed a researcher-developed 36-item questionnaire probing EFL enjoyment, autonomy, self-efficacy and sources of enjoyment. Students' GPAs were used as an index of achievement. Data analysis revealed that the level of enjoyment associating students' learning of English as a FL was high. No differences were found between male and female students in EFL enjoyment. EFL enjoyment correlated positively with achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy. The most frequent reported sources of EFL enjoyment included the realization of learning an important language, teachers' attitudes and positive FL classroom atmosphere. Based on results, a number of conclusions and suggestions for further research are offered.

**Key Words:** EFL enjoyment, achievement, autonomy, self-efficacy, Saudi college English majors

## الاستمتاع بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلاب السعوديين المتخصصين فيها وعلاقته بتحصيلهم واستقلاليتهم وكفاءتهم الذاتية

مستخلص:

أجريت الدراسة لتحقيق ثلاثة أهداف، تمثل أولها في التعرف على مستوى ومصادر الاستمتاع بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لدى (١٢٠) من الطلاب السعوديين المتخصصين فيها. وتمثل الهدف الثاني في الكشف عن الاختلافات بين الطلاب الذكور والإناث في الاستمتاع بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. أما الهدف الثالث فتمثل في الوقوف على العلاقة بين الاستمتاع بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وتحصيل الطلاب واستقلاليتهم وكفاءتهم الذاتية. أكمل كل طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية البنين والبنات بكلية العلوم والدراسات الإنسانية بثادق، جامعة شقراء (باستثناء الطلاب الذين أجريت عليهم الدراسة الاستطلاعية للتحقق من صدق وثبات أداة الدراسة) مقياس مؤلف من (٣٦) مفردة من إعداد الباحث لقياس (أ) الاستمتاع بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، (ب) ممارسات التعلم المستقل و(ج) الكفاءة الذاتية، واستخدام المعدل التراكمي للطلاب كمؤشر على التحصيل. وجاء مستوى استمتاع الطلاب بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية مرتفعاً. وعلى خلاف نمط النتائج في الدراسات السابقة، لم تكشف نتائج الدراسة الحالية عن اختلافات بين الجنسين في الاستمتاع بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. وأظهرت النتائج أيضاً علاقة ارتباطية موجبة بين الاستمتاع اللغوي وكل من التحصيل والتعلم المستقل والكفاءة الذاتية. أما المصادر الأكثر تأثيراً في استمتاع الطلاب بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية فكانت إدراكهم بأنهم يدرسون لغة هي الأهم في العالم، وممارسات المعلمين الإيجابية (مثل التشجيع وإظهار التقدير لإنجازات الطلاب واستخدام الأنشطة التي تنفذ في مجموعات صغيرة) والبيئة الصفية المشجعة. قدم الباحث في ضوء النتائج مجموعة من المقترحات التدريسية والبحثية. الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستمتاع بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، التحصيل، الاستقلالية، الكفاءة الذاتية، الطلاب السعوديون المتخصصون في اللغة الإنجليزية.

## **Introduction**

Learning is associated with emotions such as enjoyment, hope, pride, anxiety and boredom. Such emotions are critically important for students' motivation, learning, performance and identity development (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007). For decades, research on emotions has focused primarily on negative emotions, especially language anxiety (Daubney, Dewaele, & Gkonou, 2017). Positive emotions involved in FL learning have not been as widely researched (Arnold, 2011; Imai, 2010). Reflecting on this issue, Dornyei and Ryan (2015: 9) maintained that emotions, despite being crucial in our lives, have been largely “shunned” by second language acquisition scholars. They attributed this to the cognitivist tradition in the field and thus called for overcoming this “emotional deficit” in second language acquisition research. This same deficit was mentioned by Dornyei in an interview with Murphy (2010: 22) in his answer to a question about the connection between emotion and learning:

Emotions have been by and large neglected in the field of SLA. This is all the more surprising given that: (a) classrooms are venues for a great deal of emotional turmoil, (b) emotions are known to be salient sources of action (e.g. when we act out of fear or anger or happiness), and (c) the process of language learning is often emotionally highly loaded for many people.

Successful learning, or lack of it, may arouse a plethora of different emotions in students, which in consequence may affect their performance and govern their future directions (Pekrun & Perry, 2014). Emotions are the “heart of the foreign language learning process” because without them inadequacy in learning would take place (Dewaele, 2015: 3). With the advent of positive psychology, researchers began to shift their attention to positive emotions (MacIntyre, & Mercer, 2014; MacIntyre, 2016; MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2016). Reflecting on the significant role of positive emotions in FL learning, Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018: 26) suggest that “Learners in the grip of positive emotions are better able to notice things in their classroom environment and become more aware of language input, which allows them to absorb more of the FL”. They also suggest that positive emotions can alleviate negative arousal, “which is crucial because negative emotions cause a narrowing of focus and limit the potential language input”. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) also point out that positive emotions promote

students' resilience in the face of challenges and encourage them to explore and play, two key activities that boost collaborative learning.

Enjoyment is one of the positive emotions experienced in the FL classroom. It deserves to be thoroughly investigated due to its critical role in successful language learning (Piechurska-Kuciels, 2017). According to Mierzwa (2019, 171), general learning enjoyment “can be perceived as the pleasure experienced once a learner appreciates the learning material ... and feels capable of dealing with and completing the activity he/she is faced with...”. FL enjoyment, according to MacIntyre (2016: 5), is a desirable emotion, which operates as a driving force for the FL learning process, as it results in higher academic achievement, boosts motivation, and functions against negative emotions. Described by Deweale and MacIntyre (2016: 216), FL enjoyment refers to “a complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of challenge and perceived ability that reflect human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks”. FL enjoyment can be further conceived of as “a psychologically positive activating state, which is believed to propel the FL learner into action and strengthen the motivational processes” (Mierzwa, 2019: 172).

Researchers have explored some aspects of FL enjoyment. These include the level of enjoyment experienced by given groups of FL learners, gender differences in FL enjoyment, the impact of FL enjoyment on achievement/performance variables and the relationship it has with other affective variables such as anxiety. However, because the topic is somehow new, especially in the Arab EFL setting, further research is needed to confirm aspects that have been studied and explore other aspects that have not yet been researched. For this reason, the present study aimed to investigate the level of FL enjoyment experienced by a group of Saudi college EFL majors and sources of EFL enjoyment from their perspective. It also explored gender differences in EFL enjoyment and the correlation of enjoyment with achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

From the survey of research on FL enjoyment, it can be observed that studies so far have focused on a few topics relevant to FL enjoyment. One topic is gender differences, with all studies reporting females having higher levels of FL enjoyment than males. Some studies reported a positive correlation between FL enjoyment and achievement.

These two issues need to be further researched given the small number of studies tackling them and the novelty of research on positive emotions in FL learning. It is also observed that the only affective variable examined in relation to FL enjoyment is anxiety. The relationship between FL enjoyment and other affective variables, e.g., self-efficacy needs to be researched. This relationship is not intuitive and it needs to be explored empirically. A learner who enjoys learning the FL can lack self-efficacy. Accordingly, the current study aimed to explore the following aspects of EFL enjoyment in the Saudi context: the level of EFL enjoyment among Saudi English majors, gender differences in EFL enjoyment, the relationship that EFL enjoyment has with achievement, autonomy, and self-efficacy, and sources of EFL enjoyment from the perspective of Saudi English majors. More specifically, the study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the level of Saudi English majors' EFL enjoyment, autonomy and self-efficacy?
2. Are there significant differences between EFL enjoyment experienced by Saudi male and female English majors?
3. Does EFL enjoyment correlate with achievement, autonomy, and self-efficacy?
4. What are sources of EFL enjoyment according to Saudi English majors?

### **Review of Literature**

In the review of literature most emphasis will be placed on FL enjoyment because it is a somehow new concept. Then short accounts will be given about autonomy and self-efficacy because too much has been written about them. These short accounts will focus on concepts and important research-based facts about each.

#### ***FL Enjoyment: Origin, Concept and Significance***

For several decades, namely with the emergence of the FLCAS, anxiety has been the most researched emotion in FL learning. Recently with the advent of positive psychology, the role of positive emotion in second and foreign language acquisition began to capture the interest of researchers (MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2016). The emergence of positive psychology is most often attributed to the American psychologist Seligman who called in 1999 for a shift from negative to positive psychology, i.e., from focus on negative emotions to focus on positive emotions (Seligman 1999: 181). Since then, a movement called

positive education began to emerge. Positive education is defined as education for both traditional skills and for happiness (Seligman, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009: 293). Seligman, Gillham, Reivich and Linkins (2009: 295) suggested that “well-being should be taught in school on three grounds: as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking”.

The positive education movement was further supported by two theories, the first of which is Fredrickson’s Broaden-and-Build theory. Positive emotions according to this theory “broaden people’s momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources” (Fredrickson, 2003: 219). The second theory is the Control Value Theory (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). This theory assumes that positive achievement emotions can motivate learners to aim higher, to be more creative and flexible in dealing with difficulties, and to regulate themselves better. Translating the assumptions of these theories to FL learning, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) point out that effects of positive emotion go beyond pleasant feelings, as they enhance learners’ ability to notice things in the classroom and strengthen their awareness of language input. Furthermore, positive emotions can alleviate the adverse effects of negative arousal, which, according to Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014: 241), can “promote personal resiliency in the face of difficulties”.

Enjoyment is a multidimensional construct with multiple components. According to one view, enjoyment has five components: affective, cognitive, motivational, expressive and physiological (Hagenauer & Hascher, 2014). Mierzwa (2019: 172) explains how these components apply to the FL classroom where joy experienced while learning the FL constitutes the affective variable. Heightened attention, memory and problem solving make up the cognitive dimension. She therefore defines FL enjoyment as “The feeling of excitement and/or a spontaneous joy derived from participation in a novel and challenging foreign language activity (affective component), which arouses learners’ curiosity and generates interest (cognitive component)”. The motivational component of enjoyment results from willingness to sustain positivity and take up future FL challenges. The two remaining

components of enjoyment, physiological and expressing, relate to the bodily reaction to the positive emotional experience.

In another view (Li, Jiang, & Dewaele, 2018) there are three dimensions of enjoyment: enjoyment relating to the teacher (teaching practices, support, positive attitude, teacher's recognition) and enjoyment relating to the atmosphere in the FL classroom (peer interaction, positive atmosphere, positive engagement). The third dimension is FL enjoyment-private that relates to personal progress and development in the FL. FL enjoyment-private can stem from progress realization, distinguished performance, the sense of pride of one's accomplishment, positive changes in the process of FL learning, etc. For this reason, researchers highlight the significance of classroom interactions as a major source of FL enjoyment. Interactions with friendly and supportive peers, as well as with FL teachers who are positive, encouraging, and who offer a variety of classroom activities which learners find interesting and challenging can enhance the enjoyment they experience while learning the FL (Pavelescu & Petric, 2018).

Researchers also mention psychological and social dimensions of enjoyment, giving special attention to the social dimension for its significant role in FL learning. It is the social dimension of enjoyment that contributes to the broadening of language learning experiences. People with positive emotions are attracted to each other, helping them to build resources that collectively might be considered social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002). This is crucial in FL learning given the dependence that learners have on speakers of the language, e.g., teachers, advanced learners and peers (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement & Conrod, 2001).

### ***Research into FL Enjoyment***

FL enjoyment is one of the positive emotions being researched these days. Researchers address the level of enjoyment experienced by given groups of FL learners, gender differences in FL enjoyment, the impact of FL enjoyment on achievement/performance, and the relation between FL enjoyment and other affective variables. In a study conducted by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), 1746 FL learners from around the world completed an electronic questionnaire probing their FL enjoyment and FLCA. Statistical analyses revealed that levels of FL enjoyment were significantly higher than those of FLCA. More specifically, respondents who reached higher levels in the FL, who felt



that they were performing better than their peers in the FL class, who were higher up in the education system and who were older experienced significantly higher levels of FL enjoyment and significantly less FLCA. Female participants reported both more FL enjoyment and more FLCA. Main themes in the feedback of participants on enjoyable episodes in the FL included specific classroom activities, peer recognition, teacher recognition, realization of progress and authentic use of the FL. Activities that were reported to boost FL enjoyment included unusual activities such as debates, making a film or preparing group presentations. What is distinctive in these activities is that they give learners a choice in shaping the activity so that it matches their concerns and interests. What also emerged from the narratives was that the classroom environment played a crucial role in the experience of FL enjoyment and FLCA. Participants reported episodes where teachers had been positive, used humour judiciously, were well-organized, respectful, and praised students for truly good performance. Learners' feedback also indicated that peers can boost FL enjoyment.

In a study by Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018), the differential effect of positive and negative emotions on FL performance was explored. More specifically, the study investigated the effect of FL enjoyment and FLCA on FL performance in a group of 189 foreign language pupils in two London secondary schools and a group of 152 Saudi English as a foreign language learners and users of English in Saudi Arabia. Higher levels of enjoyment and lower levels of anxiety in the FL class correlated with better test results. However, the positive effect of FL enjoyment on performance was stronger than the negative effect of FLCA. Based on this finding, the researchers concluded that FL enjoyment seemed to matter more than FLCA in FL performance. Qualitative material collected from the Saudi participants shed light on the causes of FLCA and FL enjoyment. Some students reported little enjoyment, increased anxiety and a growing lack of self-confidence in English. This was mainly attributed to teachers' pedagogical practices as illustrated in students' comments on sources of enjoyment and anxiety.

The level of FL learning enjoyment and FL teaching enjoyment experienced by FL teachers in Poland was investigated by Mierzwa (2019). The informants of the study were Polish educators teaching foreign languages at different educational levels. The results of the study revealed that teachers experienced a relatively high level of both FL

learning enjoyment and FL teaching enjoyment, regardless of sociodemographic variables (e.g. place of residence, level of education, language being taught). A significant gender difference in FL learning enjoyment was found in favor of females, while no gender difference was found in FL teaching enjoyment. Sources of enjoyment included in informants' writings about episodes shaping their positive emotion regarding the FL were teacher's attitude, interesting topic of lessons, learning real-life language, teacher's sense of humor, positive atmosphere in the classroom, possibility of self-development, challenging activities, and games, play-roles and funny activities.

Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau and Dewaele (2016) investigated gender differences in FL enjoyment and FLCA among 1736 FL learners (1287 females, 449 males) from around the world. Assessment of FL enjoyment and FLCA was based on 21 items reflecting various aspects of FL enjoyment, and 8 items extracted from the FLCAS. Besides, an open question was used to collect narrative data about episodes shaping participants' enjoyment and anxiety experiences. A unique aspect of this study is that it explored gender differences in FL enjoyment and FLCA at item level. Female participants reported having significantly more fun in the FL class. They felt they were learning an interesting language and they were prouder than male peers of their FL performance. However, female participants experienced significantly more FLCA. They reported worrying significantly more than male peers about their mistakes and were less confident in using the FL. The researchers argued that girls' heightened emotionality benefits the acquisition and use of the FL.

Li, Dewaele and Jiang (2019) examined the interaction between FLCA and FL enjoyment of 1,307 Chinese students, the single and combined effects of FLCA and FL enjoyment on self-perceived English proficiency and actual English achievement, and finally, the effect of English achievement on FL enjoyment and FLCA. Negative correlations were found between FLCA and FL enjoyment in three groups at different levels of English achievement. FLCA was found to be significantly negatively related to self-rated proficiency at all achievement groups while FL enjoyment was positively related. Similar significant relationships were also found between two classroom emotions and actual English achievement except in the low achievement group.

Jin and Zhang (2018) conducted a study to identify components of EFL classroom enjoyment, as well as the relationship between enjoyment

and achievement. Participants, a group of Chinese senior high school EFL students, completed a questionnaire adapted from Dewaele-Macintyre's Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale and took an achievement test consisting of listening, reading comprehension, multiple-choice exercise, filling in blanks, translation and essay writing. Based on findings, the researchers concluded that EFL classroom enjoyment included a private dimension specific to FL learning itself and social dimensions shaped by classroom interactions with teachers and peers. Furthermore, learning activities and outcomes were found to promote EFL enjoyment. Results also revealed a positive effect of EFL enjoyment on English achievement. They therefore recommended that learners' interest guide the design of class activities that should be challenging, but manageable.

Pavelescu and Petric (2018) studied positive emotions involved in learning English as FL in Romania. Participants were four adolescent EFL students. The research method was qualitative, including a written task, semi-structured interviews with learners and their teachers, lesson observations and English-related events outside the classroom. It covered participants' emotional experiences in the ecologies of school and outside the classroom over one semester. Researchers could identify two major positive emotions, namely love for English language and enjoyment. Love for English was found to be the driving force in the learning process. It motivated learners to invest effort into language learning. More importantly, it helped participants to overcome obstacles they faced in the classroom, e.g., lack of enjoyment in certain tasks.

### ***FL Enjoyment Questionnaires***

Researchers have developed a number of questionnaires to measure emotions involved in general and FL learning. Questionnaires measuring emotions involved in general learning appeared first and FL researchers adapted them to FL learning producing enjoyment questionnaires specific to FL learning. One of the leading questionnaires of general learning emotions is the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ) that was developed by Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfeld and Perry (2011). This questionnaire was employed and/or adapted in several studies. It consists of 24 scales organized in three sections assessing class-related, learning-related, and test-related emotions. Each scale contains items measuring the affective, cognitive, motivational, and physiological components of the respective emotion. The scale is

answered based on a 5-point Likert scale (1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree). The class-related emotion scales have 80 items probing how students feel with regard to class-related enjoyment, pride, anger, anxiety, shame, hopelessness, and boredom. The learning-related emotion scales have 75 items probing students' feelings with regard to studying in terms of the same eight emotions. Finally, the test emotion scales include 77 items instructing students to indicate how they feel with regard to test-related enjoyment, hope, pride, relief, anger, anxiety, shame, and hopelessness.

Mierzwa (2019) developed a questionnaire measuring FL learning and teaching enjoyment (participants for whom the questionnaire was developed were EFL teachers) based on the above described general learning enjoyment questionnaire (Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfeld and Perry, 2011) and the FL enjoyment Questionnaire (Dewaele & McIntyre, 2014). Example items from the questionnaire are 'I looked forward FL classes', 'Reflecting on the progress of my students made me happy', 'I got physically excited when my learning was going well' and 'I studied more than required because I enjoyed FL much'. Furthermore, participants were provided with a list of 8 sources of enjoyment (e.g. teachers' attitude, positive atmosphere in the classroom, challenging material, learning real-life language) and they were asked to select at least 1 and at most 3 sources which in their opinion have the greatest impact on their enjoyment experience. The participants could also suggest their own sources of enjoyment rather than the ones listed in the questionnaire. The final part of the questionnaire included two questions of a qualitative nature. In these two questions, teachers were asked to describe specific moments in their own foreign language learning experience from which they derived joy, as well as specific moments from which their students derived joy.

The instrument used in nearly all studies that explored FL enjoyment is the 21-item questionnaire developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). They used the Interest/Enjoyment subscale included in the questionnaire developed by Ryan, Connell and Plant (1990) as the kernel of their questionnaire. They adapted the 7 items related to enjoyment, fun, interest and boredom to the FL environment. They also added items relating to such aspects as improvement in using the FL, pride in one's own performance, group membership, the social environment and cohesiveness, and attitudes towards the learning of the

FL. Responses were given on standard 5-point Likert scale with the anchors absolutely disagree=1, disagree=2, neither agree nor disagree=3, agree =4, strongly agree=5. They additionally included an open-ended question requesting respondents to describe a specific event or episode in their FL class that they really enjoyed. Answers to the open-ended questions are analyzed to identify sources of enjoyment from the perspective of the respondents themselves.

### ***Autonomy***

Autonomy is defined as the ability to take charge of one's own learning (Holec, 1981: 3). An autonomous learner is the learner who has the ability and willingness to make choices independently. Ability and willingness are therefore what makes one an autonomous learner. Ability entails possessing knowledge about alternatives and skills to carry out choices. Willingness entails motivation and confidence to take responsibility for choices. Knowledge and skills need to be learnt, while motivation and confidence require a supportive learning environment (Littlewood, 1996: 97). What follows is a number of observations about autonomy from literature. First, there are degrees of autonomy, which means that with appropriate practices autonomy can develop over time (Sinclair, 2000: 5). Second, autonomy has both social and individual dimensions, i.e., autonomy does not mean learning without other people. In this respect, Oxford (1990: 144-146) asserts that knowing how to make use of other people as interlocutors and sources of input is an indication of learner autonomy. Third, for the FL classroom to be learner autonomy supportive, there should be a shift in the teacher's and the learner's roles. The role of the teacher needs to change from an authoritative conveyor of knowledge into a facilitator and a guide of the learning process. By the same token, learners' role needs to change from passive recipients of knowledge into active planners of their own learning. The development of learner autonomy is "a move from teacher-directed teaching environment to a learner-directed learning environment" (Dam, 2011: 41). That is, making classrooms learning-centered through group work and task performance for instance can have the effect of enhancing learners' autonomy.

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capability to attain required performances (Bandura, 1986: 391). According to Bandura (1997: 80) there are four sources of self-efficacy. These are mastery experience,

vicarious experience, persuasions and psychological states. Mastery experience means that achievements raise one's level of self-efficacy. Success strengthens belief in personal efficacy, while failure undermines it, "especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established". Vicarious experience means that other individuals' achievements motivate us to believe that we have the same ability in gaining achievements. Persuasions means that what others say can influence our beliefs about our abilities. Individuals who are verbally encouraged and explained that they can perform a task are more likely to perform it well. Psychological states like anxiety, stress, and fear can influence our behavior. Self-efficacy is not something that comes once and forever. Rather, it has a cumulative nature. In this respect, Bernhardt (1997) describes self-efficacious learners as learners who feel really confident because of the experiences they have gained in solving problems and the approaches they have developed based on those problem solving experiences.

Self-efficacy contributes to successful learning. Bandura (1986: 390) states that 'many students have difficulty in school not because they are incapable of performing successfully, but because they are incapable of believing that they can perform successfully'. Self-efficacy regulates one's functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes. Individuals will think in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways to the extent that they are more or less self-efficacious. Thus, self-efficacious individuals are those who can motivate themselves and persevere in the face of difficulties (Tilfarlioglu & Cgmkara, 2009: 130). A research-documented positive correlation was found between self-efficacy and positive emotions like motivation and positive attitudes and negative correlation between self-efficacy and negative emotions like anxiety (e.g., Cubukcu, 2008; Farjami & Amerian, 2012). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) found a negative relationship between FL enjoyment and anxiety. Accordingly one can postulate that self-efficacy will correlate positively with enjoyment as a positive emotion. However this postulation needs to be empirically investigated.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

A total of 120 English majors (57 males and 63 females) at Thadiq Sciences and Humanities College, Shaqra University, KSA participated in the study. They had the same language experience in



terms of years of study and rate of exposure to the language. Because of segregation in the Saudi educational system, girls and boys are taught by same sex teachers in separate sections. The English program that students study comprises skill courses, literary courses, theoretical and applied linguistics courses and general courses.

### ***The Questionnaire***

The researcher reviewed related literature to develop the questionnaire probing students' EFL enjoyment (Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfeld and Perry, 2011; Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014; Mierzwa, 2019), autonomy (Cotterall, 1995, 1999) and self-efficacy (Henk & Melnick, 1995; Seeger, 2009). Items of the enjoyment subscale related to attitudes towards learning English, learning activities, the learning environment (teachers and peers), improvement in using the FL, and pride in own performance and accomplishments. Items of the autonomy subscale reflected awareness of own progress, out-of-class learning practices and the ability to identify weaknesses and overcome them. Finally, the self-efficacy subscale included items relating to beliefs in own competence, perseverance in the face of challenges and comparing oneself with mates. Furthermore, the questionnaire had a question requesting students to select from a list provided at least 1 and at most 3 sources of enjoyment (e.g., positive atmosphere in the classroom, challenging and interesting activities, learning an important language). In a final open-ended question, students were asked to mention sources of enjoyment rather than the ones included in the previous question.

The preliminary version of the questionnaire that included 38 items was content validated by five EFL professors to decide on its validity for probing EFL enjoyment, autonomy and self-efficacy. This led to the deletion of some items and the reformulation of others. Accordingly, the final version had 36 items assessing EFL enjoyment (18 items), autonomy (8 items), self-efficacy (8 items), and the two questions about sources of EFL enjoyment. The questionnaire was then pilot-tested on 40 students rather than students in the main sample. Participants were asked to respond to items by selecting one of four anchors ranging from strongly agree =5 to strongly disagree =1. Items with negative statement were reverse coded.

Correlations among items and total scores of the subscales they belonged to were computed to check the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Correlation coefficients ranged from .50 to .85, for items

of enjoyment, from 0.51 to 0.83 for items of autonomy and from 0.38 to 0.68 for items of self-efficacy. All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level, hence indicating that the questionnaire was internally consistent. As to reliability, the subscales of enjoyment, autonomy, self-efficacy and the total questionnaire yielded significant alpha reliability estimates (0.95, 0.84, 0.69, and 0.94 respectively), indicating that the questionnaire was quite reliable.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Students completed an electronic version of the questionnaire at the end of the second semester of the academic year 2019/2020. The questionnaire was delivered to the students in their mother tongue so that language would not interfere with results. Obtained data were then treated statistically using the SPSS.16 program. Means and standard deviations were computed to identify the level of students' EFL enjoyment, autonomy and self-efficacy. The t-test for independent samples was used to explore gender differences in EFL enjoyment. Pearson correlation coefficients were also computed to investigate the correlation of EFL enjoyment with achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy. Finally, percentages were used to outline the sources of EFL enjoyment that students mentioned in their answers to the last two questions in the questionnaire.

### Results

#### *The level of students' EFL enjoyment, autonomy and self-efficacy*

To answer the first research question about the level of Students' EFL enjoyment, autonomy and self-Efficacy, means and standard deviations of their scores were computed. This data is listed in table 1.

**Table 1.**  
**Means and standard deviations of students' scores**

Item	M	SD	level
<b>Enjoyment</b>			
English classes are pleasurable to me.	4.20	.931	High
I feel good while in English classes.	4.05	1.05	High
I like interacting with others during activities.	4.02	.855	High
Reflecting on my progress in English learning makes me happy.	4.62	.831	High
I lose track of time during activities.	4.07	.909	High
The activities we do in the English class make me feel happy.	3.97	1.09	High
I cooperate with others during activities.	4.30	.931	High
I feel close to others when doing activities.	3.97	1.11	High
I study more than required as I enjoy learning English	3.75	1.26	High



<b>much.</b>			
<b>In the English class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>.778</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I lose track of what is going on outside of the activities we do.</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>.963</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I feel connected with others during activities.</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>1.11</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>The English classroom is a positive environment.</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I get physically excited when my learning is going well.</b>	<b>4.60</b>	<b>.771</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I'm a worthy member of the English class.</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I don't get bored in the English class.</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>When I do activities, I think about nothing else.</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>The atmosphere in English classes is good.</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>.870</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>.721</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Autonomy</b>			
<b>My success in learning English mainly depends on my own efforts.</b>	<b>4.67</b>	<b>.758</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I can make use of English movies to promote my English proficiency.</b>	<b>4.52</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>It's up to the language learner to find opportunities to practice the foreign language.</b>	<b>4.40</b>	<b>.974</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I like to talk to teachers about the quality of my work and assignments.</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I know how my language learning progresses.</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I can work well on my weaknesses in my English study.</b>	<b>4.12</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I make good use of my free time in English study.</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I attend out-class activities to practice and learn English.</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>.710</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Self-efficacy</b>			
<b>I'm sure that I can improve my English.</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>.741</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>.840</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>When I encounter difficulties in learning English, I do not give up.</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I can say that my confidence in English classes is high.</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I feel calm when I participate in group or whole-class activities.</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>I do not think that I am a good learner of English.</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>1.55</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>I'm less confident in language learning than other students are.</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>I am not good at solving the problems I face in learning English.</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>.596</b>	<b>High</b>

According to Oxford's scoring system (2001): high = 3.5 or above, medium = 2.5 - 3.4, low = 2.4 or lower.

It is clear from table 1 that mean scores of the students' EFL enjoyment, autonomy and self-efficacy were all high (M=4.11, 4.19 and 3.85 respectively). All items of enjoyment and autonomy were given high ratings. Three items of the self-efficacy subscale were given medium ratings and the

other five items were given high ratings. This indicates that students experienced high levels of EFL enjoyment, autonomy and self-efficacy.

### *Gender differences in EFL enjoyment*

To answer the second research question about gender differences in EFL enjoyment, the t-test for independent samples was used. This statistics produced the data listed in table 2 below.

**Table 2:**  
**Gender differences in EFL enjoyment**

Item	Group	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
English classes are pleasurable to me.	Males	4.31	.57 <sup>†</sup>	1.34	.184
	Females	4.09	1.16		
I feel good while in English classes.	Males	4.00	.802	-.504-	.615
	Females	4.09	1.24		
I like interacting with others during activities.	Males	4.16	.676	1.66	.100
	Females	3.90	.979		
Reflecting on my progress in English learning makes me happy.	Males	4.53	.758	-1.24-	.217
	Females	4.71	.888		
I lose track of time during activities.	Males	4.10	.724	.352	.726
	Females	4.05	1.05		
The activities we do in the English class make me feel happy.	Males	4.10	.859	1.27	.206
	Females	3.86	1.25		
I cooperate with others during activities.	Males	4.53	.826	2.59	.011
	Females	4.09	.979		
I feel close to others when doing activities.	Males	4.37	.672	4.02	.000
	Females	3.62	1.30		
I study more than required as I enjoy learning English much.	Males	3.58	1.19	-1.41-	.160
	Females	3.90	1.32		
In the English class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.	Males	4.53	.504	.361	.719
	Females	4.48	.965		
I lose track of what is going on outside of the activities we do.	Males	4.10	.859	.326	.745
	Females	4.05	1.05		
I feel connected with others during activities.	Males	4.10	.859	1.71	.090
	Females	3.76	1.28		
The English classroom is a positive environment.	Males	4.31	.805	.422	.674
	Females	4.23	1.16		
I get physically excited when my learning is going well.	Males	4.63	.586	.425	.672
	Females	4.57	.911		
I'm a worthy member of the English class.	Males	4.21	1.06	.351	.726
	Females	4.14	1.04		
I don't get bored in the English class.	Males	3.74	1.03	-.349-	.727
	Females	3.81	1.23		
When I do activities, I think about nothing else.	Males	4.00	.692	2.21	.029
	Females	3.62	1.37		
The atmosphere in English classes is good.	Males	4.00	.732	.000	1.00
	Females	4.00	.984		
Total	Males	4.19	.405	1.03	.305
	Females	4.05	.918		

Data in table 2 reveals that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female students in 15 out of the 18 enjoyment items and the total subscale ( $t=1.03$ ,  $p=.305$ ). The only significant differences were in favor of male students in the items ‘I cooperate with others during activities’, ‘I feel close to others when doing activities’ and ‘When I do activities, I think about nothing else’.

***The correlation of EFL enjoyment with achievement, autonomy, and self-efficacy***

To answer the third research question, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to identify the correlation of EFL enjoyment with achievement (students’ GPAs), autonomy, and self-efficacy. Table 3 below shows correlation data.

**Table 3.**

<b>Correlations of EFL enjoyment with achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy</b>		
	<b>EFL enjoyment</b>	
<b>Achievement</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	<b>.63**</b>
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>.000</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	<b>.89**</b>
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>.000</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	<b>.51**</b>
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>.000</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>120</b>

From table 3, it can be seen that EFL enjoyment had significant ( $p=.000$ ) positive correlations with achievement ( $r=0.63$ ), autonomy ( $r=0.89$ ), and self-efficacy ( $r=0.51$ ).

In addition to correlations, the t-test for independent samples was used to find out if there were differences in achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy between students with high and low to moderate enjoyment scores. For this reason, students were classified into two groups: students with high enjoyment scores (3.5 and above,  $N=90$ ) and students with moderate to low enjoyment scores (3.4 and lower,  $N=30$ ) based on Oxford’s (2001) scoring system. The reason for grouping students with moderate and low enjoyment scores in one category was the small number of students with low enjoyment scores. This data is presented in

table 4.

**Table 4. Differences in achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy by level of EFL enjoyment**

	Group	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
Achievement	High enjoyment	90	3.56	.584	3.13	.002
	Moderate to low enjoyment	30	3.17	.591		
Autonomy	High enjoyment	90	4.42	.451	5.30	.000
	Moderate to low enjoyment	30	3.51	.898		
Self-efficacy	High enjoyment	90	4.02	.488	5.54	.000
	Moderate to low enjoyment	30	3.34	.610		

As listed in table 4, there were statistically significant differences between students with high EFL enjoyment and those with moderate to low EFL enjoyment in achievement ( $t=3.13$ ,  $p=.002$ ), autonomy ( $t=5.30$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and self-efficacy ( $t=5.54$ ,  $p=.000$ ). That is, students with higher EFL enjoyment tended to be more achieving, autonomous and self-efficacious than students with lower EFL enjoyment.

#### *Sources of EFL enjoyment reported by students*

To answer the fourth research question about sources of EFL enjoyment, percentages of sources selected by students from the list provided to them in item 41 were computed. Table 5 below shows these sources.

Table 5.

**Sources of EFL enjoyment students selected from the list provided**

No.	source	Mention	%
1.	Learning an international language	84	70
2.	Teachers' attitudes	68	57
3.	The progress made in learning the language	62	52
4.	Activities done in small groups	34	28
5.	The humorous spirit in the language classroom	31	26
6.	The supportive language learning environment	26	22

As listed in table 5, the three sources of enjoyment that the highest percentages of students reported were learning an international language (70%), teachers' attitudes (57%) and the progress made in learning the language (52%). Three other sources were reported by 28% (activities done in small groups), 26% (the humorous spirit in the language

classroom), and 22% (the supportive language learning environment) of the students.

In addition to the previous sources that students selected from the list provided to them, they reported some other sources in response to the last item in the questionnaire. These included watching untitled English TV episodes, movies and YouTube videos (47 mentions, 39%), reading for pleasure (21 mentions, 17%) and communication with English-speaking people via social media applications (18 mentions, 15%). These and other sources are listed in the table below.

**Table 6.**  
**Additional sources of EFL enjoyment**

No.	Source	Mention	%
1.	Watching untitled English TV episodes, movies, YouTube videos	47	39
2.	Reading for pleasure	21	17
3.	Communication with English-speaking people via social media applications, e.g., Cambly	18	15
4.	Following and reading English news	16	13
5.	Reading literature	12	10
6.	Using the language to learn new things	11	9
7.	Self-fulfillment	8	7

## **Discussion**

Results of this study revealed that Saudi college English majors experience a high level of EFL enjoyment. The mean score of their EFL enjoyment (4.04) was higher than the mean score (3.4) reported in the study by Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) that was conducted on 152 Saudi high school students. This finding seems logical given that participants are college English majors. Students who join college English departments like the English language and for this reason they decide to pursue learning it in postsecondary education. This is evident from their selection of ‘learning an international language’ as their most frequent source of EFL enjoyment. Another reported major source of their EFL enjoyment was ‘watching untitled English TV episodes, movies, YouTube videos’. Using the language for such purposes is undoubtedly an indication that they like it and seek to develop their competence in using it.

No significant differences were found between male and female students in EFL enjoyment. This finding is inconsistent with all the studies that the researcher surveyed (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014;

Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau & Dewaele, 2016; Mierzwa, 2019). A possible explanation for this is different study populations. Unlike participants in the present study who were college students, participants in studies surveyed in this manuscript were pre-university students. Furthermore, participants in this study were English majors who chose to pursue studying English in their postsecondary education. This may explain why male and female students in this study had similar emotions. College English programs attract students who are especially interested in the FL regardless of their sex.

EFL enjoyment correlated positively with achievement and students with higher enjoyment proved to achieve higher than those with lower enjoyment. This finding concurs with all previous studies (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele, Witney, Saito & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018). This is in line with Pekrun's (2006) description of enjoyment as an example of positive achievement emotions. It seems rational that students who enjoy the FL achieve better than students who do not. A student who enjoys the language will put more time and effort in learning it. Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018: 26) maintain that "Learners in the grip of positive emotions are better able to notice things in their classroom environment and become more aware of language input, which allows them to absorb more of the FL". Furthermore, students in the present study reported that they studied English more than required because they liked it ( $M=3.75$ ). Besides, autonomous learning, which undoubtedly enhances achievement, is supposed to be higher in students who enjoy learning the FL. It should be noted here that data analysis revealed a positive correlation between EFL enjoyment and autonomous learning.

Likewise, EFL enjoyment correlated positively with autonomy and self-efficacy. Students with higher enjoyment were found to be more autonomous and self-efficacious learners of English than students with lower enjoyment. This seems reasonable since students who enjoy learning the FL will use all available avenues to learn it on their own. They will also, as maintained by Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018: 26) take measured risks. For this reason Dewaele (2015) pleads for teachers to use unpredictable and challenging classroom activities to boost students' enjoyment and encourage them to take risks.

As to sources of EFL enjoyment, the two most frequent sources of enjoyment that students selected from the list provided to them in the

questionnaire were their realization that they were learning an international language and teachers' attitudes. This concurs with the study by Mierzwa (2019: 180) where EFL teachers reported that their students derived enjoyment from teachers' attitudes and from their realization that they learned real-life language. Jin and Zhang (2018: 11) and Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014: 237) also reported the development of interpersonal relationships with the teacher as an important source of FL enjoyment. For this reason, researchers advise FL teachers to use non-threatening teaching practices and techniques to boost students' positive emotions (Piccardo, 2013). Teachers are also advised to promote group solidarity and create an emotionally safe classroom environment where linguistic experimenting is encouraged (Dörnyei & Murphy, 2003; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele, 2015).

The third most frequent source of EFL enjoyment according to participants is the progress made in learning the language. This is consistent with the study by Li, Jiang and Dewaele (2018) where students reported deriving enjoyment from the sense of pride in one's accomplishments and positive changes in the process of FL learning. This same source was reported by participants in Dewaele-MacIntyre's (2014) study. Analyzing students' views on episodes of enjoyment in the FL class as incorporated in their writings, Dewaele and MacIntyre wrote "Many participants mentioned the moment at which they realized that their long effort in mastering an aspect of the FL paid off".

Three other sources were reported by students but they were less frequent than the previous three ones. These were activities done in small groups, the humorous spirit in the language classroom and the supportive language learning environment. Small group work, which is quite different from the traditional lecture-based teaching, boosts students' positive emotions. Teachers are therefore required to focus more on group work at the expense of traditional whole-class lecturing which can be boring to students. Group work also allows for positive peer relationships, which makes the learning experience positive and encouraging. Teachers' supportive practices and good relationships with peers create positive atmosphere in the classroom, another source of positive emotions (Li, Jiang, & Dewaele, 2018). Furthermore, the humorous spirit in the language classroom can boost FL enjoyment. Teachers should therefore realize that being humorous at appropriate times can make a difference in students' learning of the FL. Of course,



being humorous does not mean being ridiculous. A teacher should set a balance between being humorous and being earnest.

In addition to the previous sources that students selected from the list provided to them in the questionnaire, students added some other sources. The most frequent of these were (1) watching untitled English TV episodes, movies and YouTube videos, (2) reading for pleasure and (3) communication with English-speaking people via social media. This signifies that students derive enjoyment from using the language for real-life purposes. For instance, a student who makes a successful exchange with an English-speaking person via mass media will have a sense of accomplishment. This same effect occurs if the student can read a text elsewhere and understand it. Reading itself is an enjoyable activity. This possibility of self-development and pride in accomplishments were reported by students in other studies as sources of FL enjoyment (Li, Jiang, & Dewaele, 2018; Mierzwa, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

The present study investigated the level of EFL enjoyment among 120 Saudi college English majors. Descriptive statistics revealed that students had a high level of EFL enjoyment. Unlike previous studies, the t-test for independent samples revealed no significant differences in EFL enjoyment between male and female students. Correlation analyses revealed that EFL enjoyment correlated positively with achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy. Furthermore, students with high EFL enjoyment were found to have higher achievement, autonomy and self-efficacy than students with moderate to low enjoyment. Frequent sources of enjoyment reported by students included teachers' attitudes and positive atmosphere in the classroom. EFL Teachers are therefore required to create a positive atmosphere in their classrooms by using non-threatening pedagogical practices and by establishing a kind of rapport with their students. They should increase time allocated to group work at the expense of whole-class lecturing. Group work makes possible the establishment of good relationships with peers, which is an element of positive classroom atmosphere. Because pride in accomplishments was also found to affect EFL enjoyment positively, teachers should appreciate students' performance and sensitize them to the progress they make. A significant observation that should be mentioned here is that the generalizability of this study's results is limited by the relatively small number of participants. Further research



could therefore replicate the present study with larger samples from different Saudi universities. The effect of teachers' pedagogical practices on EFL enjoyment can also be a topic for further research.

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