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## THE IMPACTS OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THANH DONG UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** This action research, grounded in Fredrickson and Cohn's (2008) Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotions (PE), investigates the impacts of PE on English Language Learning (ELL) in a language learning context, particularly the relationship between PE, foreign language enjoyment (FLE), and language proficiency. It employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating interventions involving mindfulness practices, collaborative learning strategies, and the integration of gamified elements. The study utilizes various data sources, including a Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) questionnaire adapted from Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), reflective emotion journals, and language proficiency tests. Findings reveal that fostering PE, such as creativity, social interaction, and supportive teaching, contributes significantly to foreign language enjoyment. Moreover, the correlation between FLE and language proficiency underscores the potential benefits of interventions aimed at cultivating PE. This research advocates for pedagogical approaches that prioritize the promotion of PE within the language learning context, ultimately enhancing both enjoyment and proficiency.

**Keywords:** Positive emotions, Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), language proficiency, The Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotion by Fredrickson and Cohn (2008)

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# TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA CẢM XÚC TÍCH CỰC ĐẾN VIỆC HỌC TIẾNG ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC THÀNH ĐÔNG

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**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu hành động này, dựa trên thuyết mở rộng và xây dựng của cảm xúc tích cực của Fredrickson và Cohn (2008), nghiên cứu về tác động của cảm xúc tích cực đối với việc học tiếng Anh trong ngữ cảnh học ngoại ngữ, đặc biệt là mối quan hệ giữa cảm xúc tích cực, niềm đam mê học ngoại ngữ (FLE) và trình độ ngoại ngữ. Nghiên cứu này áp dụng phương pháp kết hợp, tích hợp các can thiệp liên quan đến việc thực hành chánh niệm, chiến lược học tập cộng tác và tích hợp yếu tố trò chơi công nghệ. Nghiên cứu sử dụng nhiều nguồn dữ liệu khác nhau, bao gồm bảng hỏi về niềm đam mê học ngoại ngữ (FLE) phỏng theo tác giả Dewaele và MacIntyre (2014), nhật ký cảm xúc và bài kiểm tra trình độ ngoại ngữ. Các kết quả cho thấy việc khuyến khích cảm xúc tích cực, như sáng tạo, tương tác xã hội và giáo dục hỗ trợ, điều này đóng góp đáng kể vào sự thích thú của sinh viên khi học ngoại ngữ. Hơn nữa, mối tương quan giữa FLE và trình độ ngoại ngữ nhấn mạnh tiềm năng lợi ích từ các can thiệp nhằm nuôi dưỡng cảm xúc tích cực. Nghiên cứu này làm sáng rõ hơn các phương pháp giảng dạy ưu tiên sự thúc đẩy cảm xúc tích cực trong ngữ cảnh học ngôn ngữ, từ đó nâng cao cả sự thích thú và trình độ của sinh viên

**Từ khóa:** cảm xúc tích cực, niềm đam mê học ngoại ngữ (FLE), trình độ ngoại ngữ, Thuyết mở rộng và xây dựng của cảm xúc tích cực của Fredrickson và Cohn (2008)

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the field of education regarding the role of emotions in the learning process (MacIntyre et al., 2019). According to Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), Fredrickson and Cohn (2008), Reilly (2021), Sugawara and Sugie (2021), positive emotions (PE), in particular, have gained attention for their potential to enhance various aspects of education, including motivation, engagement, and overall academic achievement. This research is situated within the broader context of positive psychology (PP), which focuses on understanding and promoting positive emotional experiences and well-being. In the realm of education, the influence of PE on learning outcomes has become a subject of investigation across various disciplines and educational settings.

The specific context of this study revolves around ELL, a field that attracts millions of learners worldwide. English is not only a global lingua franca but also a crucial skill for personal and professional development in a globalized world. However, language learning can be challenging and, at times, frustrating. Understanding how PE can affect the process of learning English is of great importance, as it can potentially lead to more effective teaching methodologies and improved language acquisition outcomes (Reilly, 2021; Wang et al., 2023; Zeihofer, 2023). This study aims to delve into the dynamics of PE in the context of ELL, shedding light on how these emotions evolve over time and their impact on language proficiency.

The study aims to investigate the impact of PE on English Language Learning (ELL). Firstly, while there is a growing body of research on emotions in education, there remains a

relative paucity of studies that track the emotional experiences of learners over an extended period. This study seeks to address this gap by offering insights into the long-term dynamics of PE during the ELL journey. Secondly, the study is grounded in the belief that understanding the role of PE in ELL can have practical implications for educators, language instructors, and policymakers. If PE are found to correlate with improved language proficiency and sustained motivation, it may pave the way for the development of teaching strategies that intentionally cultivate positive emotional experiences in the classroom. Moreover, this research aligns with the broader goals of enhancing the quality of education and fostering an environment that promotes not only academic achievement but also the emotional well-being of learners.

The objectives of this study are designed to provide a clear framework for investigating the impact of PE on ELL. Firstly, one of the primary objectives is to examine the trajectory of PE experienced by English language learners over an extended period. By tracking emotional experiences, this study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of how these emotions evolve throughout the ELL journey. Secondly, the study seeks to explore the relationship between PE and English language proficiency, particularly whether there is a correlation between the presence of PE, and the learners' proficiency levels. To achieve the objectives outlined above, this research poses two research questions.

- To what extent do PE evolve over time during the ELL process?
- Is there a statistically significant correlation between the presence of PE and English language proficiency among learners?

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. The Importance of Positive Emotions***

PE, as understood in the field of psychology, encompass a range of uplifting feelings, including joy, happiness, gratitude, and contentment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Fredrickson & Cohn, 2008; Reilly, 2021; Sugawara & Sugie, 2021; Tahirbegi, 2023). They are characterized by their positive or pleasant nature, distinguishing them from negative emotions like fear or anger. Beyond mere pleasure, PE have a broader impact on one's mental state and behavior, as they are known to expand cognitive and behavioral repertoires, enabling individuals to explore new ideas, build connections, and develop personal resources.

The importance of PE in human life is profound, touching various aspects of mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Reilly, 2021). Specifically, PE can either enable individuals' happiness and contentment or build psychological resilience against pressure and adversity. Furthermore, PE has effectively been proved to promote physical health, enhance immune function and reduce the risk of chronic illnesses. It is additionally said that individual with PE could promote social interactions and relationships as well as enhance stimulation and cognitive functioning, namely creativity, better problem-solving abilities, and higher levels of productivity. Moreover, experiencing PE can prevent people from being overwhelmed by negativity and counterbalance negative emotions. In the context of ELL, PE are particularly significant. They can enhance motivation to learn, promote engagement in the learning process, and contribute to improved academic performance. Additionally, PE in the classroom can create a supportive and conducive learning environment, where students feel encouraged and inspired to explore and excel in their studies. Recognizing and cultivating PE in educational settings can, thus, lead to more effective and fulfilling learning experiences.

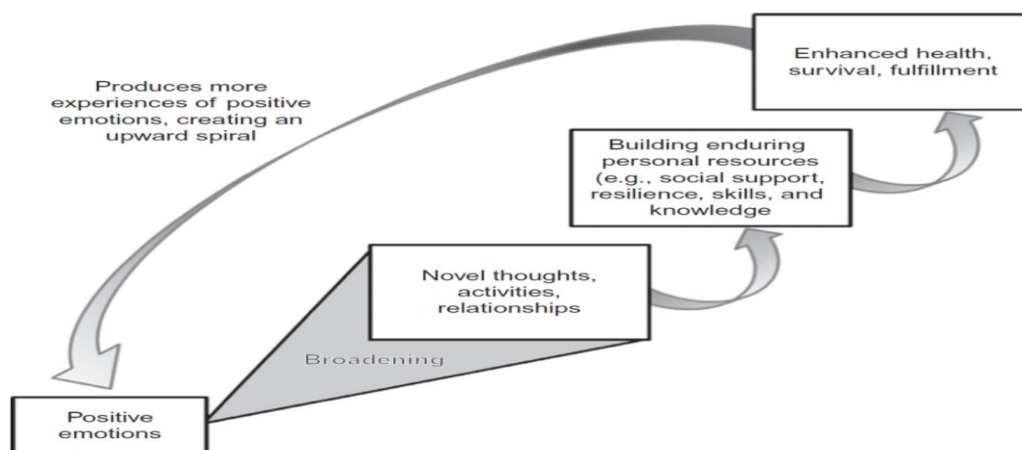
## 2.2. The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

The Broaden-and-Build Theory of PE, proposed by Fredrickson (2001) has significantly shaped our understanding of how PE impact individuals' psychological and cognitive functioning. This theory posits that “PE broaden individuals' thought-action repertoires and build their psychological resource” (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 5). Accordingly, PE, such as joy, gratitude, and amusement, serve as catalysts for cognitive and behavioral expansion. Fredrickson argues that when individuals experience PE, their awareness and attention broaden, enabling them to see a wider range of possibilities and ideas. This broadening effect fosters creativity, problem-solving, and cognitive flexibility. Consequently, in the context of ELL, the Broaden-and-Build Theory suggests that PE can lead to a more open and receptive mindset to enhance their language acquisition abilities (Fredrickson, 2001).

Fredrickson and Branigan (2005) further developed the theory by emphasizing the role of PE in social interactions and relationships. They argue that PE not only broaden individual cognitive resources but also build social resources. In the context of ELL, PE can foster stronger bonds between learners and language instructors or among learners themselves. These positive social connections can facilitate language practice, peer collaboration, and the exchange of linguistic knowledge. Learners who experience PE in a supportive social environment may feel more motivated to engage in language-related activities, such as group discussions, language exchange programs, or collaborative projects (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

### Figure 1

*The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions by Fredrickson and Cohn (2008) (cited in Mohammadipour et al., 2018, p. 88)*



Fredrickson and Cohn's (2008) rendition of the Broaden-and-Build Theory of PE extends the comprehension of how PE initiate a transformative sequence of events that elevates well-being and augments various facets of human functioning. These emotions stimulate individuals to explore novel ideas, engage in previously uncharted activities, and establish meaningful relationships. Importantly, the broadening effect goes beyond immediate experiences to encompass the expansion of enduring personal resources. These cognitive attributes, including creativity and problem-solving skills, behavioral traits such as resilience, and the acquisition of new knowledge. One of the central propositions of this theory is that this process triggers an upward spiral of well-being, where the PE engendered by broadening experiences contribute to better health, increased resilience, and an overall sense of life fulfillment. Crucially, this process forms a self-perpetuating cycle in which the experience of

PE generates more PE, creating a reinforcing loop that continually augments well-being and functioning. In the context of ELL, this perspective implies that the experience of PE during language acquisition, such as the joy of successful communication or the satisfaction of mastering new language skills, can motivate individuals to seek out additional language-related experiences, further fueling their language learning motivation and success.

Reilly (2021) extends the application of the Broaden-and-Build Theory to education and language learning specifically. This research highlights that PE have the potential to broaden students' language learning strategies and increase their willingness to engage with the language, for instance, seeking out additional opportunities for language use and practice. Moreover, the theory suggests that the PE experienced during ELL can build psychological resources over time, leading to greater language proficiency, self-confidence, and intrinsic motivation (Reilly, 2021).

### ***2.3. Intervention Strategies to Promote Positive Emotions***

In the realm of language learning and the cultivation of PE among students, several intervention strategies have been examined in previous research. This discussion will focus on three specific strategies: mindfulness and relaxation techniques, collaborative learning, and gamified learning platforms.

#### **2.3.1. Mindfulness Practices**

Mindfulness practices have gained attention for their potential to reduce stress and anxiety while fostering positive emotional states in language learners. A study by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2014) explored the impact of mindfulness training on foreign language anxiety and found that learners who engaged in mindfulness exercises reported decreased anxiety levels and increased PE. These techniques typically involve activities like meditation, deep breathing, and mindfulness-based stress reduction programs. The cultivation of mindfulness may help students manage their emotional responses during language learning, promoting a more positive and relaxed state of mind (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Morgan and Katz (2021) aimed to investigate the impact of mindfulness on foreign language classroom anxiety. They conducted a comparative study in a postsecondary learning environment, with experimental and control groups. They found a negative correlation between mindfulness scores and foreign language classroom anxiety at the beginning of the study, but there were mixed findings between groups after a 13-week series of mindfulness practices. Experimental participants expressed strongly positive opinions toward mindfulness in their open-ended responses. Zeilhofer (2023) focused on the implementation of meditative practices in a German foreign language setting. Two distinct varieties of meditation were introduced to different classes over a year, while a third class served as a comparison group. Results indicated that the treatment conditions showed marked signs of academic achievement and increased awareness compared to the comparison group. Differences were found between the two meditation methods in terms of various aspects of mindfulness. Students also showed a positive disposition toward meditative practices in general. Wang and Liu (2016) investigated how mindfulness influenced college English as a foreign language (EFL) students' learning. They explored mindful learning strategies and their impact on competence, memory, creativity, and positive affect. The study involved 24 undergraduate freshmen in China, and data collection included pre-surveys, post-surveys, work samples, observation notes, and reflective journal entries. The findings highlighted that mindfulness strategies helped students create a comfortable learning environment, enhanced their writing and thinking abilities, facilitated the learning process, and promoted cooperative

learning. Zeilhofer and Sasao (2022) examined the relationship between mindfulness levels and the ability to learn new third language words in German among Japanese undergraduates. They explored different dimensions of mindfulness and their associations with vocabulary learning. The study found that higher mindfulness was linked to better vocabulary retention, with the dimension “Acting with Awareness” playing a key role. Notably, different mindfulness dimensions were related to productive and receptive vocabulary learning.

### **2.3.2. Collaborative Learning Strategies**

Collaborative learning strategies have been widely investigated in language education, emphasizing the role of social interaction in language acquisition and emotional well-being. Collaborative learning often involves group discussions, peer tutoring, and cooperative projects, providing learners with opportunities to interact and support one another in their language learning journey (Hoang & Nooy, 2020). This approach fosters a sense of belonging and positively influences learners' emotional experiences (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). Hoang and Nooy (2020) discussed the effectiveness of group work in learning but highlighted concerns about its applicability in the Vietnamese context. They focused on aligning group work with Vietnamese students' preferences while respecting their cultural nuances. The study utilized three data sources: students' expressed preferences, their performance in a group task, and their reflections on the task while watching its recording. The findings revealed a tension between the traditional belief in hierarchical social relations and the desire for more egalitarian group interactions. Nguyen and Bui (2023) conducted a study focusing on Vietnamese EFL students' perceptions of group work. Their research revealed that most students in this context considered group work to be an effective strategy for enhancing their language skills, promoting healthy interdependence, and ensuring emotional stability. However, the study also identified some challenges, including unfair contributions, reduced autonomy, and concerns related to maintaining group harmony and personal preferences for peers. In essence, this study sheds light on the multifaceted nature of collaborative working in language learning. In a similar vein, Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) investigated the implementation of technology to foster student participation in EFL classes. The findings from this study indicated that both teachers and students embraced a wide range of digital techniques for information sharing and collaborative learning. The study underscores the significance of technology as a means to encourage interaction and enhance students' active involvement in the learning process. Tran and Nguyen (2021) adopted an action research design to explore the impact of technology-based communication on students' writing performances and perceptions. Their research revealed that the integration of technology tools led to a more collaborative learning environment. Additionally, it reduced difficulties students faced regarding cognitive, emotional, and socio-cultural aspects, ultimately fostering a more positive learning experience.

### **2.3.3. The Integration of Gamified Elements**

The integration of gamified elements into language learning has gained popularity, as it can engage and motivate students while promoting PE. Research by Hamari, Koivisto, and Sarsa (2014) explored the effects of gamification on various aspects of user engagement and found that gamified learning platforms positively influenced learners' motivation and enjoyment. Gamification often includes elements such as rewards, challenges, and progress tracking, which can create a sense of achievement and enjoyment in language learners. The use of gamified learning platforms may contribute to more positive emotional experiences and increased motivation in the language learning process (Zainuddin, 2018). In the realm of

gamified learning platforms, Nguyen et al. (2021) examined the influence of Quizizz on EFL students' vocabulary achievement and their perceptions of using this digital app. Their research highlighted that Quizizz significantly improved students' vocabulary, demonstrating the positive impact of gamified learning tools on language acquisition. Furthermore, qualitative data revealed that students held optimistic attitudes toward technology-enhanced vocabulary learning. Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) investigated the effects of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on freshmen's vocabulary acquisition and their perspectives on this approach. Their study found that MALL-integrated classrooms not only enriched vocabulary achievement but also motivated students to engage with technology for improving their lexical knowledge. This research emphasizes the potential of digital tools in enhancing language learning outcomes.

In summary, mindfulness and relaxation techniques, collaborative learning, and gamified learning platforms have been investigated in language learning contexts and have shown promise in fostering PE among students. These strategies not only contribute to emotional well-being but also enhance motivation and engagement, ultimately benefiting language acquisition. While previous research provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of these interventions, further exploration within the specific context of the current study can offer tailored guidance on selecting the most suitable strategies to achieve its objectives.

#### ***2.4. The Impacts of Positive Emotions in English Language Learning***

Numerous academic studies have rigorously explored the multifaceted implications of PE across various domains, shedding light on their cognitive, psychological, and educational ramifications. These studies contribute significantly to our understanding of the broader construct of well-being and the ways in which PE influence human experiences.

Fredrickson and Branigan (2005) conducted seminal research supporting the broaden hypothesis, which posits that PE expand cognitive processes. Experiment 1 provided empirical evidence by demonstrating that PE widen the scope of attention compared to a neutral emotional state. Experiment 2 further strengthened this hypothesis by revealing that PE lead to a more extensive array of thought-action urges. These findings substantiated the idea that PE broaden cognitive functions, providing critical support for the broaden-and-build theory. Gong's (2018) study ventured into the realm of positive emotional state interventions among employees and their implications for mental health. Employing PE diaries, the research unveiled that such interventions significantly elevated employees' PE while concurrently mitigating negative emotions and emotional exhaustion. These findings underscore the instrumental role of PE interventions within workplace contexts, highlighting their potential to bolster mental well-being and overall employee satisfaction. Kaap-Deeder et al. (2023) introduced the concept of emotion crafting, which involves proactively fostering PE through awareness and action components. They developed the Emotion Crafting Scale to quantify emotion crafting, showing its validity in predicting psychological well-being and mental health outcomes. This inquiry underscores the pragmatic value of active emotional management in enhancing overall psychological functioning and highlights the potential for proactive emotional regulation. Phan et al. (2019) delved into the predictors of PE among university students, considering both social and personal influences. Structural equation modeling confirmed the direct predictive effects of the social milieu, personal resolve, relationships with others, and academic liking experience on PE. This highlights the multifaceted nature of emotions and their intricate interplay with contextual determinants, providing insights into enhancing emotional well-being among students. Reilly's (2020) action research project explored the emergence of various achievement

emotions during the process of second language acquisition. The study revealed that a plethora of achievement emotions surface throughout the course, emphasizing the significance of understanding and nurturing PE within the realm of second language acquisition. This research extends our knowledge of the emotional dimensions of language learning. Sugawara and Sugie's (2021) study aimed to discover the influence of varying arousal levels engendered by PE on thought-action repertoires. The findings discerned that high-arousal PE elicited a more pronounced broadening effect on thought-action repertoires compared to low-arousal PE and neutral emotional states. This nuanced exploration highlights the intricate interplay between arousal levels and cognitive processes, contributing to our understanding of the relationship between affect and cognition. Wang and Marecki's (2021) qualitative study, based on students' and teachers' experiences within EFL classrooms in China, advocated the adoption of PP 2.0 (PP 2.0) principles to deepen comprehension of learners' emotional experiences in second language acquisition. It underscored the influential role played by PE in shaping student engagement within educational settings, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to language education. Finally, Wang et al.'s (2023) research delved into the interconnections among learners' emotions, engagement, and English achievement among EFL learners in China. The findings divulged correlations between these emotions and accentuated the mediating function of engagement in the relationship between emotions and academic achievement. This research offers valuable insights into the realm of EFL teaching and learning, providing a comprehensive view of the role of emotions in educational contexts.

In short, PE significantly enhance ELL by expanding cognitive abilities and increasing engagement. They improve motivation and satisfaction, reducing emotional exhaustion. Interventions that boost PE promote mental well-being and academic achievement. The application of PP principles highlights their role in shaping effective learning environments.

### **2.5. Research Gaps**

While the aforementioned studies have made substantial contributions to our understanding of the role of PE in various contexts, they also highlight several research gaps and areas where further investigation is warranted.

A significant research gap in the field of ELL is the limited number of studies that track the development of PE in language learners over an extended period. While existing research provides valuable insights into the immediate impact of PE, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that follow learners' emotional trajectories throughout their language learning journey. An investigation in the study can bridge this gap by observing participants' emotional experiences, such as enjoyment and motivation, from the beginning of their language learning endeavor and tracking these emotions over months or even years. This will offer a deeper understanding of how these emotions evolve, fluctuate, and impact language proficiency over time, aligning perfectly with your action research approach focused on intervention and improvement. Another research gap within the context of ELL is the scarcity of research that systematically tests the effectiveness of specific intervention strategies designed to enhance PE among language learners. While it is recognized that PE can contribute to more effective language learning, there is a need for targeted interventions that can deliberately cultivate these emotions. This action research can address this gap by developing and implementing intervention strategies aimed at fostering PE in language learners. These strategies can be designed, implemented, and assessed in a real classroom setting, providing practical insights into their feasibility and impact. By rigorously evaluating the outcomes of these interventions, the researcher can contribute valuable evidence-based practices to the field of ELL and guide



language educators in creating more emotionally supportive learning environments.

By focusing on these two research gaps - conducting an investigation of PE in ELL and developing and testing intervention strategies - the action research study can offer a comprehensive understanding of how PE evolve over time and how they can be deliberately cultivated to enhance language learning outcomes.

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1. Research Design***

The action research design was selected for its effectiveness in meeting the research objectives within the EFL classroom. This approach is particularly suitable as it emphasizes collaboration, engagement, and intervention, allowing researchers, educators, and students to actively participate in the study. As Elliott (1991) notes, action research is ideal for developing and implementing targeted strategies that enhance PE and language learning.

This design supports the practical application of PP principles by encouraging a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Day et al., 2002).

- In the planning phase, the researcher designed lesson plans with different activities related to mindfulness practices, collaborative strategies, and integration of gamified elements to enhance PE and language learning.
- During the acting phase, these strategies were implemented in the classroom setting. Educators and students actively engaged in activities designed to foster PE and improve language acquisition. The researcher attempted to manage that interventions were applied consistently and effectively.
- In the observing phase, the researcher collected data on the interventions' impact to monitor changes in students' emotional and educational outcomes. This step involved gathering feedback from both students and the researcher-teacher himself to assess the effectiveness of the strategies employed.
- Finally, the reflecting phase allowed the researcher to analyze the data collected, evaluated the success of the interventions and identified areas for further improvement. This reflection informed subsequent cycles of planning and action to enable continuous refinement of strategies based on real-time feedback and outcomes.

#### ***3.2. Participants***

The study was conducted in a specific setting, involving 27 pre-intermediate level sophomores at Thanh Dong University, who were not pursuing English as their major. Thanh Dong University, located in Hai Duong Province, provided an ideal context for this research due to its diverse student body and the presence of learners from various academic backgrounds. These 27 participants represented a significant sample size, considering the specific level and major of interest, and were chosen due to their pre-intermediate language proficiency level, ensuring a certain level of language competence while still allowing for substantial improvement.

The choice of non-English majors among the participants is noteworthy, as it reflects the broader applicability of the study's findings beyond specialized language programs. Their diverse academic interests and career goals make them a suitable group for investigating the impact of PE on language learning outcomes, as these students may have varying degrees of

intrinsic motivation and enjoyment when learning English. Thanh Dong University's academic environment provides valuable insights into the role of PE in language learning across disciplines and is representative of similar higher education institutions.

### **3.3. Data Collection Instruments**

#### **3.3.1. Questionnaire**

FLE is the pivotal emotional construct in the context of second language acquisition. FLE, as adapted by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), pertains to the PE experienced by language learners during the process of learning a foreign language. It encompasses feelings of joy, engagement, and satisfaction that students derive from their language learning experiences. FLE is crucial because it not only signifies learners' intrinsic motivation but also contributes to their overall language proficiency and willingness to engage in language-related activities. It is typically assessed through self-report questionnaires that gauge students' self-perceived enjoyment levels during language learning.

The FLE framework further delineates two dimensions of enjoyment: social and private. The social dimension pertains to the gratification derived from interpersonal interactions while employing the foreign language. This encompasses activities like engaging in conversations with peers, instructors, or native speakers. Conversely, the private dimension delves into individualized experiences of enjoyment, including the contentment derived from comprehending the language, discovering cultural intricacies, or accomplishing language-related milestones. Additionally, the FLE framework acknowledges the dynamic interplay between emotions and motivation. PE, such as enjoyment, function as intrinsic motivators, propelling learners to willingly partake in language-related activities. In this regard, the framework aligns with self-determination theory, underscoring the pivotal role of intrinsic motivation in facilitating effective and sustainable learning.

Furthermore, research rooted in the FLE framework, which employs a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” to assess 21 items, demonstrating that learners who report higher levels of enjoyment concurrently exhibit heightened motivation, increased engagement, and an enhanced overall proficiency in the foreign language. This empirical basis reaffirms the credibility and practical relevance of the FLE framework.

#### **3.3.2. Emotion Journals**

Emotion journals are a qualitative data collection instrument that can provide rich insights into the emotional experiences of language learners (Billups, 2021; Rose et al., 2019). Emotion journals, also known as affective diaries, are essential tools for researching individuals' emotional experiences, particularly in educational settings. They serve to collect and analyze emotional responses over time, offering insights into learners' emotional dynamics during their educational journeys.

Students are encouraged to maintain journals or diaries where they document their daily experiences, including their emotional states, within the language learning context. The students have to complete seven emotion journals which are equivalent to seven topics throughout the intervention. They are required to focus on themes such as mindfulness practice, collaborative learning, and gamified elements. They reflect on how mindfulness activities impacted their emotions and stress levels, the effect of peer interactions and group dynamics on their learning, and how gamified elements influenced their motivation and engagement. Additionally, students are asked to document their overall emotional experiences, with positive

and negative emotions and their attitudes toward learning.

### **3.3.3. Language Proficiency Tests**

Language proficiency tests, such as the Preliminary English Test (PET) offered by Cambridge, hold a distinct relevance in the context of the current study on PE in language learning. These tests serve as crucial instruments for evaluating individuals' language skills, encompassing both their reading and listening capabilities, which are intricately tied to emotional experiences in language acquisition.

The PET reading test, designed to assess reading comprehension, aligns with the study's focus on PE by examining how learners engage with written texts. As individuals interact with reading and listening materials, the experience can evoke PE, particularly when they understand the content, find it enjoyable, or achieve a sense of accomplishment. Therefore, this test's outcomes not only gauge reading and listening proficiency but also indirectly reflect the emotional aspects of learning, shedding light on how PE may influence learners' reading comprehension.

Similarly, the PET listening test is closely intertwined with emotional experiences during language acquisition. This assessment delves into candidates' ability to comprehend spoken language, mirroring the real-world encounters where learners engage in conversations or listen to audio content. Successful performance on the listening test can elicit PE like satisfaction, confidence, and motivation, as it signifies the effectiveness of their language skills in practical contexts. Conversely, difficulties in listening comprehension may trigger emotions such as frustration or anxiety, showcasing the intricate relationship between emotions and language proficiency.

Furthermore, the structured scoring systems employed in these tests provide a quantitative measure of language proficiency. In the context of the current study, this quantitative data can be valuable for assessing whether PE, such as enjoyment, play a role in improving language proficiency. For instance, learners who report positive emotional experiences during reading and listening tasks may exhibit higher scores on the PET, suggesting a potential link between PE and language skill development.

### **3.4. The Procedure of the Intervention**

The intervention in the study was meticulously designed to promote PE and enhance language learning outcomes among the 27 pre-intermediate level sophomores at Thanh Dong University. The intervention spanned 12 weeks, commencing on September 5th, 2022, and concluding on November 11, 2022. During this period, participants attended two language learning periods per week, focusing on reading and listening skills, with the selected topics drawn from the "New Cutting Edge Pre-intermediate" course materials. These topics included a diverse range of engaging subjects such as unusual ways of keeping fit, TV firsts, training to be a circus performer, birthday traditions around the world, New Year celebrations in different cultures, interviews with notable figures like Ewan McGregor, and explorations into various aspects of the world, including the historical context of the 1900s and health-related discussions like a health helpline.

Each language learning period within the 12-week intervention was meticulously planned and designed to incorporate techniques aimed at fostering PE among the participants. These techniques were strategically integrated into the syllabus to create an environment that would enhance enjoyment and motivation for language learning.

- *Mindfulness Practices*: The intervention incorporated mindfulness practices, including meditation, deep breathing exercises, and elements from mindfulness-based stress reduction programs. These practices aimed to help students manage stress, reduce anxiety, and improve their overall emotional well-being. By cultivating mindfulness, participants were encouraged to stay present and engaged during language learning activities.
- *Collaborative Learning Strategies*: Collaborative learning was a central component of the intervention. Participants engaged in various collaborative activities such as group discussions, peer tutoring, and cooperative projects. These strategies fostered a sense of community and encouraged students to work together, share insights, and support one another in their language learning journey. Collaborative learning not only enriched the learning experience but also contributed to a positive emotional climate within the classroom.
- *Integration of Gamified Elements*: To further enhance PE, gamified elements were integrated into the intervention. This included incorporating rewards, challenges, and progress tracking mechanisms into the language learning process. Gamified learning platforms were utilized to create an interactive and engaging learning environment. By earning rewards, tackling challenges, and tracking their progress, participants experienced a heightened sense of achievement and motivation.

In summary, the 12-week intervention period was designed with meticulous attention to detail, incorporating mindfulness practices, collaborative learning strategies, and gamified elements to create a positive and engaging language learning environment. These techniques aimed to enhance PE, boost motivation, and ultimately contribute to improved language learning outcomes among the participants. The carefully selected topics from the course materials added relevance and interest to the learning experience, making it a holistic and effective approach to language acquisition.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

The data analysis for the questionnaire and language proficiency tests in this study was conducted using the statistical software SPSS 22.0. In the case of the questionnaire data, SPSS facilitated the computation of descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency and variability, which provided an overview of participants' responses to items related to FLE. Moreover, SPSS allowed for the examination of correlations and regression analyses to explore the relationships between FLE, language proficiency test scores, and other relevant variables. By employing inferential statistical tests, such as t-tests, the researcher was able to determine whether observed differences between groups were statistically significant. For the language proficiency test data, SPSS was utilized to calculate participants' scores on both the listening and reading tests formatted in PET by Cambridge. Descriptive statistics helped summarize the overall performance of participants on these tests, while inferential statistics, like paired-samples t-tests, could be employed to assess the impact of PE, as measured by FLE, on language test scores.

Emotion journals, in the context of research on language learning and PE, are structured diaries where participants record their emotional experiences related to language acquisition. These journals served as valuable tools for gathering qualitative data about learners' emotional states, providing insights into the impact of PE on language learning processes. Participants regularly documented their feelings, such as enjoyment, enthusiasm, or frustration, along with contextual information like the language activities involved, the learning environment, and any

social interactions. Emotion journals offered a detailed and nuanced perspective on how learners experienced PE during language learning, shedding light on the interplay between affective experiences and educational outcomes. Analyzing these journals can reveal patterns, triggers, and the role of PE in motivating learners and enhancing their language acquisition journey.

#### 4. Findings and Discussions

##### 4.1. The Differences Between the Pre- and Post-Proficiency Tests Achieved by the Students After the Intervention

The statistical analysis conducted on the pre-test and post-test scores after the intervention aimed at promoting PE reveals important insights into the effectiveness of the intervention. The following academic paragraphs provide a detailed discussion of the analysis, including statistics.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics and Paired Sample T-Test*

**Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Post-test	6.481	27	.7530	.1449
	Pre-test	6.278	27	.8243	.1586

**Paired Samples Correlations**

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Post-test & Pre-test	27	.814	.000

**Paired Samples Test**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Post-test - Pre-test	.2037	.4855	.0934	.0116	.3958	2.180	26	.039

To assess the impact of the intervention, the means of the pre-test and post-test scores were compared. The mean score for the pre-test was 6.278 ( $M = 6.278, SD = 0.8243$ ), while the mean score for the post-test was slightly higher at 6.481 ( $M = 6.481, SD = 0.7530$ ). This suggests that, on average, students' language proficiency scores improved slightly after the intervention. Secondly, the correlation coefficient between the pre-test and post-test scores was found to be 0.814 ( $r = 0.814, p < 0.001$ ). This strong positive correlation indicates a significant relationship between the two sets of scores. It implies that students who performed well on the pre-test also tended to perform well on the post-test after the intervention, and vice versa.

Thirdly, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the differences in scores between the pre-test and post-test were statistically significant. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the two sets of scores,  $t = 2.180, p = 0.039$  (two-tailed). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means ranged from 0.0116 to 0.3958. The statistically significant difference in scores suggests that the intervention aimed at promoting PE had a discernible impact on students' language proficiency. The mean

improvement of approximately 0.2037 points on a scale of 1 to 10, while seemingly modest, is statistically significant given the sample size. This indicates that the intervention was effective in enhancing language learning outcomes.

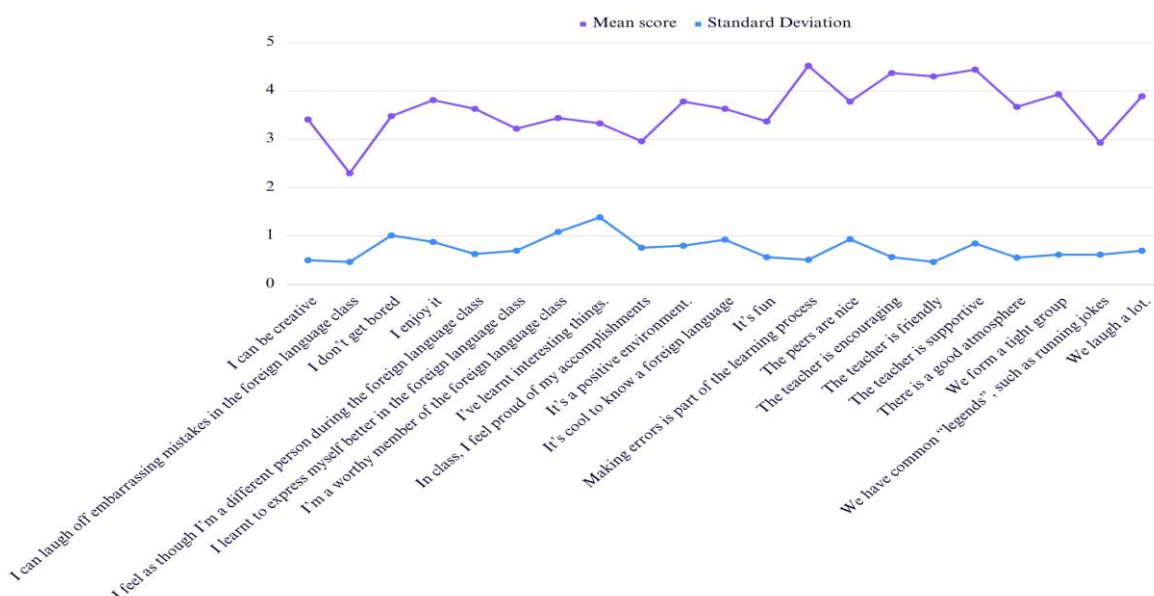
These findings have practical implications for language educators. They suggest that incorporating positive-emotion-promoting techniques into language learning can lead to measurable improvements in students' language proficiency. The strong positive correlation between pre-test and post-test scores also highlights the importance of pre-intervention assessment to identify students' initial proficiency levels accurately.

#### 4.2. Students' Foreign Language Enjoyment

The data provided offers insights into students' foreign language enjoyment across various dimensions, revealing their perceptions and experiences within the language learning context. Figure 2 illustrates their level of foreign language enjoyment

**Figure 2**

*Students' Levels of Foreign Language Enjoyment*



One notable aspect of students' FLE was their openness to creativity, as indicated by  $M= 3.41$ . This suggests that students felt encouraged to express themselves creatively within the foreign language class. Furthermore, the data reflected a high degree of acceptance of making errors as a part of the learning process ( $M=4.52$ ). This indicates a positive learning environment that embraced mistakes as opportunities for growth. The qualitative data from the journals underscored the students' desire for creative expression. Many students shared how they felt a sense of liberation in experimenting with language use, trying out new phrases, and exploring their linguistic abilities during activities like role plays or creative discussions.

*“...Today during the role-play activity, I tried to use some phrases we learned last week, and my classmates applauded me. I felt amazed to creatively apply what I learnt...” (EFL.St.3)*

*“... In our language game, we had to come up with sentences using new vocabulary. I loved the challenge of creating sentences that made sense and were grammatically correct. It was like a language puzzle, and I enjoyed the moment of it...” (EFL.St.21)*

They expressed joy in being able to communicate their thoughts in a way that felt more authentic and individualized.

*“...Our discussion about cultural differences was enlightening. I expressed my opinions freely, and my friends appreciated my unique viewpoint. Language learning isn't just about words; it's about sharing your perspectives” (EFL.St.17)*

Students also seemed to derive enjoyment from the social aspects of the foreign language class. The mean scores for statements related to peer interactions, such as "The peers are nice" (M=3.78) and "We laugh a lot" (M=3.89), suggest that students perceived their classmates as supportive and that humor played a role in fostering a positive classroom atmosphere. The reflective journals illuminated the significance of positive peer interactions. Students often described the joy they experienced when working collaboratively with their peers during group activities or games like Kahoot. They found these interactions to be engaging and mentioned how the positive camaraderie among classmates created an enjoyable and supportive learning atmosphere. Here are some extractions from students' emotion journals.

*“...During our group discussion, everyone was actively engaged, sharing ideas and helping each other. It felt like a small community where we were all supporting each other's learning journey” (EFL.St.8)*

*“...I was nervous to speak up at first, but my classmates were encouraging. They patiently listened to me, corrected my mistakes gently, and cheered for every attempt. It boosted my confidence to participate more...” (EFL.St.13)*

Additionally, the high mean scores for statements related to the teacher, such as "The teacher is encouraging" (M= 4.37) and "The teacher is supportive" (M= 4.44), reflected students' positive perceptions of the teaching style and support provided by their instructor. In addition, the qualitative data from emotion journals affirmed the positive influence of the teacher in enhancing enjoyment. Students appreciated the teacher's encouragement during challenging tasks, where the teacher's positive feedback or guidance instilled confidence, such as *“...our teacher always encouraged us, even when we made mistakes. It made me less afraid of being wrong and more willing to try...., I was nervous to present, but my teacher gave me a reassuring smile and it eased my anxiety.....”* The journals also highlighted instances where the teacher's support and understanding motivated them to actively participate and engage in classroom activities.

The data also indicated that students find the foreign language class to be a positive and enjoyable environment, with high mean scores for statements like "It's fun" (M= 3.37), "It's a positive environment" (M= 3.78), and "There is a good atmosphere" (M= 3.67). These findings highlighted the importance of creating a conducive and enjoyable learning atmosphere to enhance students' foreign language enjoyment. The journals consistently portrayed the classroom as a fun and positive environment. Students often shared anecdotes of laughter, engaging learning activities, and a sense of comfort and support within the class. They described how these elements collectively contributed to an enjoyable learning experience, for example, *“... the atmosphere is positive and encouraging...., the classroom feels so welcoming...., the ambiance in the class is uplifting...”*

By emerging the quantitative insights from the FEL with the qualitative perspective from emotion journals, it is observed a rich tapestry of experiences that validate the questionnaire's findings. The students' reflections affirmed the importance of creativity, positive social interactions, and a supportive teaching in shaping a positive and enjoyable

language learning environment. These aspects collectively emphasized the need for holistic strategies that encompass pedagogical approaches fostering creativity, a supportive learning atmosphere, and collaborative learning to optimize foreign language enjoyment and, subsequently, language learning outcomes. Overall, the data reveals that students experienced FLE through various facets, including creativity, acceptance of errors, positive peer interactions, and supportive teaching.

### 4.3. The Correlation Between Students' Proficiency Tests and Their Foreign Language Enjoyment

The correlation analysis between the results of proficiency tests (PT) and students' FLE reveals interesting insights into the relationship between emotional experiences and language learning outcomes in the current study.

**Table 2**

*Correlation Between Students' Proficiency Tests and Their FLE*

		<b>PT</b>	<b>FLE</b>
<b>PT</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.374
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.055
	N	27	27
<b>FLE</b>	Pearson Correlation	.374	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	
	N	27	27

The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.374 indicates a positive but moderately weak correlation between PT and FLE. While the correlation is not statistically significant at the conventional 0.05 level ( $p = 0.055$ ), it suggests a noteworthy trend worth exploring further.

This finding aligns with previous research that has demonstrated a positive association between students' PE, particularly enjoyment, and their language learning achievements. According to Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), PE foster a conducive learning environment by boosting learners' motivation, willingness to engage in language-related activities, and overall well-being. When students derive enjoyment from the language learning process, it often translates into improved language proficiency.

While the correlation in this study is not strong enough to establish a definitive relationship, it hints at the potential impact of PE on language learning outcomes. The moderately positive correlation suggests that students who reported higher levels of FLE might have achieved better results in the proficiency tests. However, the absence of statistical significance could be attributed to various factors, including the sample size or the specific dynamics of the study.

## 5. Discussions

In examining the findings of the current study and aligning them with previous research, a multidimensional perspective on ELL, encompassing proficiency outcomes and emotional experiences, comes to light. The investigation examined the impact of an intervention targeting PE on language proficiency and explored students' FLE within a positive emotional learning environment.

In terms of proficiency outcomes after the intervention, the statistical analysis indicated a modest but significant improvement in language proficiency, when the post-test scores were



compared to their pre-test scores. This improvement, though seemingly slight, holds significance given the statistical significance ( $p = 0.039$ ). The findings resonate with previous research suggesting that fostering PE can contribute to enhanced language learning outcomes (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). The positive correlation between pre-test and post-test scores ( $r = 0.814$ ) underlines the importance of understanding students' initial proficiency levels to tailor interventions effectively (Zeihofner & Sasao, 2022).

Crucially, qualitative insights from the emotion journals supported the quantitative findings, offering a richer understanding of students' experiences. Students highlighted the positive impact of creativity and acceptance of errors in enhancing their language learning journey. This mirrors the construct of positive psychological capital fostering creativity and embracing mistakes are pivotal aspects. The journals also shed light on the positive social interaction students experienced during collaborative activities, affirming the significance of social interaction in language learning (Murad & Hussin, 2016). Furthermore, the supportive role of the teacher was underscored in both the quantitative and qualitative data, aligning with previous studies emphasizing the teacher's influence on students' emotional experiences and overall enjoyment (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

Examining the relationship between PT and FLE, a moderately weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.374$ ) was found, although not statistically significant at  $p = 0.055$ . This trend aligns with Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), who emphasize the influence of PE on learners' motivation and engagement, potentially impacting language learning achievements. However, the need for further investigation with larger sample sizes and refined methodologies was highlighted. The current findings contribute to the broader discussion on the connection between PE and language proficiency, inviting future research to delve deeper into this relationship.

While the current study yielded valuable insights into the relationship between PE, language proficiency, and FLE, several limitations need to be acknowledged and addressed in future research to enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings. One of the restraints is the small sample size, which may not be sufficient to generalize the findings on a broader scale. This limitation should be explicitly acknowledged in the research, as it affects the extent to which the results can be confidently applied to other contexts. Future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample to validate these findings and enhance their generalizability. Additionally, expanding the sample size in subsequent studies could provide more evidence and insights into the relationship between PE and language learning outcomes.

Secondly, the duration and intensity of the intervention may have influenced the observed effects. The present study implemented a relatively short-term intervention, and a more extended or varied intervention duration might yield different outcomes. Additionally, the intensity and consistency of the intervention were uniform across participants. Future studies could explore varying levels of intensity to discern potential dose-response relationships and optimize the intervention for different learners. Thirdly, the study relied on self-report measures, including questionnaires and emotion journals, which are subject to self-report biases. Social desirability bias may influence how participants respond to questions, potentially skewing the results. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that incorporates objective measures, such as behavioral observations or physiological data, could complement the self-reported data and enhance the validity of the findings. Last but not least, although the study's results are statistically significant, the changes observed after the intervention and the correlations between

variables are not particularly pronounced. This suggests a need for further implementation plans or additional strategies to make classroom activities truly effective and positively impactful for learners. Future efforts should focus on refining these interventions to enhance their efficacy and ensure that they contribute meaningfully to the educational experience.

## 6. Conclusions

The present study illuminates important connections between PE, language proficiency, and foreign language enjoyment in the context of language learning. The findings underscore the significance of fostering PE within the language classroom to enhance both the learning experience and language outcomes. Students' enjoyment and positive feelings were linked to increased language proficiency, showcasing the potential of creating a conducive emotional atmosphere for improved learning. Notably, the study identified that students valued creativity, acceptance of errors, positive social interactions, and supportive teaching, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of PE in language learning.

One of the key conclusions drawn from this study is the essential role of creativity and individual expression in promoting PE. Encouraging students to creatively use the language, experiment with vocabulary and grammar, and express themselves contributes significantly to their enjoyment and engagement in the learning process. The study also highlights the importance of a positive classroom atmosphere, facilitated by supportive teachers and amiable peers, in creating an environment conducive to PE and heightened foreign language enjoyment. Additionally, the correlation between foreign language enjoyment and language proficiency offers practical implications for language educators. Fostering an enjoyable and supportive learning environment can indirectly contribute to improved language proficiency. While the correlation is moderately weak, it suggests that enhancing students' enjoyment and positive emotional experiences in the language classroom can potentially lead to better language learning outcomes. This implies that educators should not only focus on instructional methods but also prioritize creating an emotionally positive atmosphere that motivates and engages students. Moreover, considering the positive impact of the intervention in promoting PE and its subsequent effect on language proficiency, future language education should integrate strategies to enhance PE systematically. Techniques such as mindfulness practices, collaborative learning, and gamified platforms should be incorporated into language curricula to promote a positive emotional climate. Educators should be trained in applying these techniques effectively, considering the diverse needs and preferences of learners.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that PE play a vital role in language learning. Fostering an environment that encourages creativity, embraces errors as opportunities for growth, and promotes positive social interactions and supportive teaching can significantly enhance students' foreign language enjoyment. Consequently, this enjoyment correlates with language proficiency, emphasizing the need to integrate strategies that foster PE within language education. Moving forward, educational approaches should aim to create enriching and enjoyable language learning experiences, acknowledging the pivotal role of emotions in the journey to language proficiency.

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