On the changing relationships between FL classroom emotions and learner-internal & teacher variables

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Positive and negative emotions are at the heart of SLA (MacIntyre et al., 2016). Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) established that FL enjoyment (FLE) and FL classroom anxiety (FLCA) are independent dimensions linked to a range of variables. A follow-up study by Dewaele et al. (2016) on 189 British pupils from two London secondary schools showed that levels of FLE/FLCA were linked to both learner-internal and teacher variables.

The current study uses the same database but adopts a pseudo-longitudinal design to investigate how the relationships between independent and dependent variables evolve over time. A comparison of the values of the dependent variables in the groups of 12-13 year olds (Time 1), 14-15 year olds (Time 2) and 16-18 year olds (Time 3) showed little variation. Independent variables that were significantly correlated with the dependent variables were introduced in multiple regression analyses.

At Time 1 only the relative standing in the FL group predicted FLE and only the language level (beginner-intermediate) predicted FLCA. At Time 2 FLE was predicted by attitude towards the FL, attitude towards the teacher, teacher predictability and number of languages known while FLCA was predicted by attitude towards the FL, results on the last test, language level, relative standing and number of languages known. At Time 3 only attitude towards the teacher was a significant predictor of FLE, and Teacher predictability and language level were the only significant predictors of FLCA.

These findings suggest that positive and negative emotions are dynamic and change over time. Fewer independent variables are linked to FLE and FLCA at the start and the end of the secondary education compared to the middle. Moreover, the nature of the relationships changes. The lack of change in average levels of FLE and FLCA over time hides a profound shift in the factors affecting them.

Keywords: foreign language enjoyment, learner-internal vs teacher-centred independent variables, diachronic change, individual differences, foreign language anxiety.