

L2 Willingness to Communicate of Korean EFL Learners: Enjoyment and Anxiety

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In the growing body of research on individual differences in second language (L2) acquisition, this study aims to explore the relationships among the emotions of foreign language enjoyment, anxiety, and willingness to communicate (WTC) among Korean secondary learners. A total of 111 participants completed a questionnaire with closed- and open-ended items that examined their English classroom experience and provided narrative data. Correlation analysis showed that enjoyment and WTC were positively and significantly related, whereas anxiety and WTC were negatively and significantly related. Multiple regression analysis revealed that anxiety was a stronger negative predictor of L2 WTC, whereas enjoyment was a weaker positive predictor. Qualitative content analysis showed that most students enjoyed playing English games and were anxious about encountering unknown words. In addition, many students demonstrated a higher level of L2 WTC when they sought recognition from their teachers. Overall, the findings highlight both quantitative and qualitative differences in enjoyment and anxiety related to L2 WTC. Implications for future studies and pedagogical practice are discussed based on these findings.

Keywords: willingness to communicate, enjoyment, anxiety, individual differences

1 Introduction

Amid the diverse strategies in language education, the emphasis on the communicative approach underscores its pivotal role in cultivating learners' ability to effectively use second/foreign languages (L2) for genuine communication, a notion supported by foundational studies (Khajavy et al., 2016; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Supporting L2 learners to engage in meaningful conversations is crucial, prompting them to actively seek opportunities to practice their language skills (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Research has consistently shown that individual differences among learners, including motivation, anxiety, and enjoyment, significantly influence their willingness

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to communicate (WTC) (Cao, 2022; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2019; Khajavy et al., 2018; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2024). Among these factors, gender differences have emerged as a particularly salient area of interest. Dewaele et al. (2016) found that female learners often report higher levels of both foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety compared to their male counterparts. This heightened emotionality can play a crucial role in language acquisition, as it may foster greater engagement and resilience in learning. Many studies found that individual differences' positive and negative effects influence L2 learning (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Initially, cognitive factors, such as aptitude and intelligence, were considered the primary concerns in L2 learning by researchers (Carroll, 2012). However, an increasing body of literature focused on the affective variables such as anxiety and enjoyment. For example, foreign language anxiety is an adverse effect discouraging learners' motivation. It is suggested that high L2 anxiety is related to lower confidence and proficiency than learners with lower anxiety, demotivating learners to communicate (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015; Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre et al., 1999).

Positive psychology gained attention in second language acquisition (SLA) field, and foreign language enjoyment research flourished. Broaden-and-build theory suggests positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, love) broaden learning abilities and build resources like social support and personal confidence (Fredrickson, 2001, 2003). Although language teachers and learners frequently mention enjoyment as a concept relevant to language learning and communication, there is little empirical research on how enjoyment affects language teaching and learning (Cao, 2022). Like in the early 1980s when there were limited empirical results on anxiety, more research is necessary for conceptualizing and measuring enjoyment in L2 context (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

According to MacIntyre and Mercer (2014), "distinguishing between positive and negative emotions leads to a more nuanced understanding of how they affect L2 learning and communication" (p. 162). Consequently, numerous studies have explored the correlations between anxiety, enjoyment, and WTC in various contexts (Lu, 2024; Peng & Wang, 2022; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2024; Wang et al., 2021). Although the Ministry of Education of Korea (2022) aims to enhance English proficiency through communicative and task-based learning approaches, many Korean students find communication-focused learning challenging (Lee et al., 2021). Given the unique educational context and cultural expectations in Korea, it is essential to explore these dynamics, specifically among Korean secondary school students. However, research in Korea on this topic remains limited, highlighting the need to identify the factors driving anxiety and enjoyment and how they influence L2 WTC (Lee et al., 2024).

Furthermore, in English as a foreign language (EFL) context, WTC research has primarily focused on Korean university students (Lee & Lee, 2020;

Lee et al., 2022), leaving secondary students underexplored. Differences in L2 WTC between secondary and university students may be due to varying motivations and interests. Secondary school students transitioning from elementary school face more academic English and frequent testing (Lee & Lee, 2021). The pressure of school grades and the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) significantly impacts their interest in learning English (Choi, 2008). University students do not experience the same CSAT pressures after passing this stage. Thus, studying secondary school students can reveal different outcomes in foreign language enjoyment, anxiety, and WTC, highlighting their unique challenges with high-stakes CSAT exams.

2 Literature Review

2.1 WTC

WTC plays a crucial role in language learning, and it is used as a primary goal of language instruction alongside linguistic and communicative competence (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Initially introduced in first language (L1) research by McCroskey and Richmond (1987), WTC is defined as a stable personality trait across various situations. However, in L2, where language proficiency ranges widely, L2 WTC appears more variable due to diverse communication opportunities and competencies (MacIntyre et al., 1998). L2 WTC is a readiness to engage in discourse in a specific L2 context influenced by linguistic, communicative, and contextual factors. MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed a pyramid model of WTC, emphasizing its dependence on linguistic and communicative competence, psychological readiness, and immediate situational influences. Based on WTC model, many studies examined both stability and fluctuation in conceptualizing L2 WTC, highlighting its situated nature (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2021).

Recent research has focused on contextual factors such as teacher support (Khajavy et al., 2018), informal digital learning (Lee et al., 2024), and learner factors such as motivation (Pavelescu, 2023), sociobiographical factors (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018), and emotions (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2024). Specifically, emotions such as enjoyment and anxiety have been found to influence L2 WTC (Peng & Wang, 2022; Wang et al., 2021). While enjoyment positively impacts WTC, anxiety tends to have a negative effect (Dewaele, 2019). In recent research, Lu (2024) examined 378 Chinese EFL learners' WTC, and they often experienced higher levels of anxiety due to test-oriented language education and teacher-centered teaching methods. Despite occasional anxiety, students generally reported higher levels of enjoyment, indicating a complex interplay of positive and negative emotions in the L2 learning experience. These intricate relationships highlight the importance of addressing positive and negative emotions in promoting effective L2 environments.

2.2 Foreign language anxiety

In the pursuit of understanding anxiety, researchers have devised scales to measure anxiety while using or learning a foreign language. For instance, Horwitz et al. (1986) defined foreign language classroom anxiety as an interaction of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to language teaching in the classroom. This construct is measured by the foreign language classroom anxiety scale, which identifies three categories of performative anxieties: communication apprehension (CA), test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

In L1 WTC, CA is probably the single most prominent predictor of WTC. McCroskey and Richmond (1990) highlighted that “the higher the CA¹ level, the lower the level of WTC” (p. 27). They examined the WTC scale’s validity and suggested that speaking anxiety might be the most influential predictor of WTC, while other variables warrant further investigation. Speaking anxiety leads learners to perceive their communication competence as lower than their peers, affecting their WTC (de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; MacIntyre et al., 1999; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). A few researchers found that L2 learners with high anxiety showed less confidence and lower proficiency than those with lower anxiety (Chastain, 1975; Dornyei & Ryan, 2015; Kleinmann, 1977). It is noted that self-assessment helps learners develop strategies to build linguistic competence. However, learners with high anxiety levels would be demotivated when they perceive their lack of proficiency (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Those findings indicate how anxiety has a negative effect on L2 learning.

There are few speaking anxiety studies in L2 contexts, such as Pakistan (Shahbaz et al., 2016), Iran (Zarrinabadi et al., 2023), and Korea (Choi, 2021; Jin & Lee, 2022). For example, Korean and Taiwanese students in university found that L2 speaking anxiety was the most prominent predictor of their L2 WTC (Lee et al., 2022). The students cited the negative effect of speaking anxiety on their WTC in the classroom, attributing it to fear of making mistakes and losing face before peers. Both Korean and Taiwanese groups reported similarly low levels of L2 WTC inside the classroom, influenced by peers, group cohesiveness, and accuracy-oriented teaching pedagogy. Lee and Lee (2020) revealed a negative effect of speaking anxiety on L2 WTC and other affective variables (e.g., motivation and grit). These results aligned with previous studies indicating a link between speaking anxiety and WTC in the L2 context. However, Choi (2021) examined both secondary and university students’ L2 WTC and found a lower correlation between speaking anxiety and WTC than other variables (e.g., L1 WTC, motivation, and communication

¹ In this paper, communication apprehension (CA) and speaking anxiety are regarded as similar concepts and will be unified as speaking anxiety afterwards.

competence). These inconsistent outcomes urge further research on L2 WTC and emotions focused on speaking anxiety in Korea.

2.3 Foreign language enjoyment

In recent years, SLA research has witnessed a significant shift towards investigating the role of positive emotions in language learning contexts (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) have delineated the unique function of positive emotions, arguing against the notion of them being opposites of negative emotions. Grounded in Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2001, 2003), they posit that positive emotions, like enjoyment, can expand learners' cognitive and behavioral repertoires, thus contributing to enhanced learning outcomes (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

Foreign language enjoyment has emerged as a focal point, encapsulating learners' experiences of pleasure, interest, and engagement in language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Unlike simple pleasure, enjoyment embodies a multifaceted emotion arising from the interplay between challenge and perceived ability, driving individuals towards achieving novel or unexpected outcomes (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Recent studies examined the nature and function of positive emotion and anxiety (Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2024; Li & Wei, 2023). It is suggested that positive and negative emotions are not opposite ends of the same continuum. However, they are "two dimensions of experience" (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014, p. 162) that are qualitatively different.

Research on enjoyment and anxiety has consistently shown a moderate negative correlation between the two constructs. Despite this correlation, they are typically regarded as separate dimensions in affective research in SLA (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Ozer & Altay, 2021). In general, enjoyment positively correlated with various sociobiographical factors such as cultural group, age, gender (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), and foreign language achievement (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Gordon, 2022). There were significant differences between North American and Asian cultural groups. The former group had the most enjoyment and the most minor anxiety, while the latter group had the least enjoyment and the highest anxiety. Also, gender groups had significant differences. The females scored both enjoyment and anxiety higher than males in the foreign language classrooms. Another study found that L2 writing joy and anxiety positively predicted L2 writing motivation (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). The results indicate that positive and negative emotions interact dynamically, suggesting that positive emotions can emerge even amidst challenging circumstances (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

From an educational perspective, these findings underscore the significance of fostering supportive learning environments that cultivate enjoyment and empower learners to navigate anxiety through meaningful engagement with demanding tasks (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Gregersen &

MacIntyre, 2014; Li & Wei, 2023). In summary, exploring positive emotions, notably enjoyment, in SLA presents a promising avenue for enriching language learning experiences and outcomes. More studies are necessitated to discern the intricate dynamics between enjoyment and anxiety; thus, educators can adopt pedagogical approaches that nurture a positive emotional climate in the language classroom (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). The study aims to examine the following research questions to fill the gap:

- (1) What are the relationships between foreign language enjoyment, anxiety, and L2 WTC of Korean secondary learners?
- (2) To what extent do foreign language enjoyment and anxiety predict participants' L2 WTC?
- (3) How do Korean secondary learners describe their episodes of foreign language enjoyment, anxiety, and L2 WTC in a classroom?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

For this study, a comprehensive data collection process was undertaken with 130 second-grade students in a girls' middle school. The school, located in a small city in Korea, provides 51 to 68 hours of compulsory English instruction per semester. After a rigorous data screening, 19 extreme values were deleted, and the remaining 111 data points were used for the analysis. Participants provided background information on English education and proficiency (Table 1). The average age to start learning English was 10 (18%), with a wide range of ages (3 – 14). Only two students had studied abroad (nine weeks and two years each), and the rest had never been out of Korea to study English. They rated their self-perceived communicative competence, with 93.7% of participants self-reporting as intermediate (55%) or beginner (38.7%) and very few as advanced level (6.3%).

Table 1. Demographic Information

English background	<i>n</i>	%
Age of start		
3 – 5	12	10.8
6 – 8	42	37.8
9 – 11	42	37.8
12 – 14	11	10.0
Non-response	4	3.6
Total	111	100
SPCC		
Beginner	43	38.7

Intermediate	61	55.0
Advanced	7	6.3
Total	111	100

Note. SPCC = self-perceived communicative competence

3.2 Instruments

After completing the demographic survey, participants responded to 31 items measuring L2 WTC, foreign language enjoyment, and L2 speaking anxiety on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (6).

The L2 WTC Scale (7 items, $\alpha = .83$) was not only adapted from Peng and Woodrow (2010) but also explicitly revised for the Korean educational context, ensuring its applicability to this study. The items included WTC in front of the class (“I am willing to do a role-play standing in front of the class in English”), with friends (“I am willing to do a role-play in English at my desk, with my peer”), and with a teacher (“I am willing to ask the teacher in English to repeat what he/she just said in English because I did not understand”).

The foreign language enjoyment questionnaire (15 items, $\alpha = .89$), initially developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016), was modified to examine enjoyment in the classroom. The scale includes two subscales: Social and private enjoyment. Social enjoyment (6 items, $\alpha = .75$) assesses enjoyment with the teacher and peers (“The teacher is friendly” or “The peers are supportive”). Private enjoyment (9 items, $\alpha = .85$) evaluates personal positive emotions in the English classroom or learning English (“I enjoy the English class” or “It is fun to learn English”).

A shortened version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (9 items, $\alpha = .82$) (Horwitz et al., 1986) was utilized, focusing on speaking activities. The items were chosen from the FLCAS and were relevant to speaking activities (“I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class” or “I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do”). Two items were reverse-coded to reflect enjoyment or comfort (“I feel confident when I speak in English class”).

The last three open-ended questions, adapted from Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016), asked participants to describe in detail specific events or episodes in their English classroom where they experienced foreign language enjoyment, anxiety, and L2 WTC.

3.3 Data analysis

The survey data were analyzed using SPSS 27 to compute descriptive statistics, correlation analysis (Research Question 1), and multiple regression analysis (Research Question 2). Qualitative content analysis was conducted using NVivo 14 to analyze responses to the open-ended questions (Research

Question 3). Qualitative analysis complements quantitative results and provides examples of enjoyment, anxiety, and L2 WTC variables. Following the approach outlined by Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011), the researcher examined participants’ narratives to identify emergent themes and notable quotes that could validate survey results. The responses were translated from Korean to English and then auto-coded in NVivo. High-frequency categories were primarily emphasized, guided by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016), and quantified into frequency counts and percentages.

4 Results

4.1 Quantitative results

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
L2 WTC	3.90	1.31	.17	-.45
Social enjoyment	4.16	.88	-.44	.06
Private enjoyment	4.12	.88	-.41	-.08
Anxiety	3.85	1.02	-.27	-.33

Note. WTC = willingness to communicate

As Table 2 shows, descriptive statistics show that the mean score of social enjoyment was the highest ($M = 4.16$), followed by private enjoyment ($M = 4.12$), L2 WTC ($M = 3.90$), and anxiety ($M = 3.85$). These results suggest that participants in this study experienced more enjoyment and L2 WTC than anxiety in their English classroom.

Correlation analysis was conducted to address research question 1. The correlations between foreign language enjoyment, anxiety, and L2 WTC were significant, with $p < .001$ (Table 3). Social, private enjoyment and L2 WTC were positively correlated ($r = .49$ and $.68$), whereas anxiety exhibited negative correlations with L2 WTC ($r = -.64$), social enjoyment ($r = -.26$), and private enjoyment ($r = -.55$).

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients

	L2 WTC	Social enjoyment	Private enjoyment	Anxiety
L2 WTC	1.00			
Social enjoyment	.49**	1.00		
Private enjoyment	.68**	.70**	1.00	
Anxiety	-.64**	-.26**	-.55**	1.00

Note. ** $p < .01$

Table 4. Multiple Regressions Analysis

Predictors	Adjusted R ²	Durbin-Watson	B	SE	Beta	t
Social enjoyment		2.12	.16	.11	.16	1.51
Private enjoyment	.56	1.89	.42	.08	.37	3.50**
Anxiety		1.87	-.41	.07	-.40	-5.22***

Note. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

To address research question 2, multiple regression analysis (using the enter method) was conducted to examine enjoyment and anxiety as predictors of L2 WTC (see Table 4). The variance inflation factor (VIF) values, indicating the severity of multicollinearity, were all close to 1, suggesting no significant multicollinearity issues (Field, 2018). This meticulous analysis ensures the reliability of these findings.

As seen in Table 4, a significant regression equation was observed for L2 WTC (adjusted $R^2 = .56$, $F(3, 107) = 48.2$, $p < .0001$). The strongest positive predictor was anxiety ($\beta = .403$, $t = -5.2$, $p < .0001$), followed by private enjoyment ($\beta = .365$, $t = 3.5$, $p < .001$), which acted as a negative predictor. However, social enjoyment did not emerge as a significant predictor of L2 WTC ($\beta = .160$, $t = 1.5$, $p < .133$). Combining the findings from Tables 2 and 3 suggests that although participants reported experiencing less anxiety than enjoyment, this negative emotion emerged as a more potent predictor than enjoyment in the classroom.

4.2 Qualitative results

Table 5. The Main Categories

Category	Frequency	%
L2 WTC		
Stamp	110	58.51%
English proficiency	56	29.76%
Speaking skills	21	11.73%
Total	187	100%
Enjoyment		
English games	119	43.43%
Friends	101	36.85%
Familiar words	28	10.22%
Class activities	26	9.5%
Total	274	100%
Anxiety		
Unfamiliar words	88	42.93%
English presentation	76	37.07%
Teacher	41	20%
Total	205	100%

As depicted in Table 5, the qualitative analysis revealed the primary categories for three variables: L2 WTC, enjoyment, and anxiety through content analysis. Due to space constraints, the categories with high frequency were primarily elaborated in the extracts. The main categories of L2 WTC included stamp, English proficiency, and speaking skills. In this school, students received stamps from the English teacher as credits for participating in English classes. Each student had a stamp board to collect their stamps, and a moment of peak willingness to communicate in English occurred when they received a stamp to fill their boards. Additionally, some students mentioned a strong desire to speak English to self-assess their English proficiency, while others aimed to enhance their speaking skills by actively participating in English classroom activities. The following extracts provide detailed participant accounts related to these main categories.

“I felt like I wanted to participate because I wanted to be proud of myself because I could get a rewarding stamp and fill the stamp board when I made a presentation.”

“Sometimes I wish I could have an English class where we communicate and talk in English because I would like to self-check my English proficiency in that way.”

For enjoyment, most of the students enjoyed playing a game in English. In their English classes, the teacher made a classroom activity named ‘bomb game’; many students recalled that moment of enjoyment. According to their responses, the game created a comfortable, less anxious atmosphere and easier interaction with teachers and peers. Another primary source of joy was talking with friends in English. Additionally, encountering familiar words during class activities was a primary source of enjoyment for the students. Extracts of each main category illustrate the specific moments when they felt enjoyment.

“It was fun to speak English while playing English games, reading the text, and taking grammar quizzes.”

“I enjoyed talking to a friend and describing a person’s characteristics in English to each other.”

Finally, anxiety encompasses three primary categories: words, English presentations, and teachers. Many students reported feeling anxious when encountering unfamiliar words in terms of meaning and pronunciation, with the knowledge of these words as a trigger for either enjoyment or anxiety in English speaking. Moreover, a significant number of students experienced nervousness during English presentations. Furthermore, the presence of a teacher was identified as an anxiety-inducing factor for EFL students. These

main categories appear to be interconnected and overlapping factors contributing to speaking anxiety. These extracts provide valuable insights into students' experiences with anxiety:

“Encountering an unfamiliar English word caught me off guard, especially when the teacher unexpectedly decided to discuss it in a presentation. This situation caused me to panic.”

“During an English presentation at school, I unintentionally mispronounced a word, leading the teacher to laugh at me. This experience left a lasting impact on me and was quite traumatic.”

“I felt extremely nervous while performing a speaking task, particularly with the teacher present. The heightened anxiety led to embarrassment as I struggled to articulate the words correctly.”

The extracts have highlighted the multifaceted nature of these experiences, illustrating how they manifest in classroom settings. Specifically, the incentive system of stamps significantly boosts L2 WTC by motivating students to engage in English-speaking activities. Enjoyment is predominantly derived from interactive and playful activities, such as games, which create a conducive and less intimidating environment for language use. Conversely, anxiety stems from challenges related to vocabulary, presentations, and the presence of teachers, indicating areas where students feel most vulnerable. These findings underscore the importance of creating supportive and engaging learning environments to foster positive emotional experiences and mitigate anxiety, ultimately enhancing students' overall language learning process.

5 Discussion

This study highlights the nuanced affective experiences of Korean middle school students in the EFL classroom, specifically focusing on the interplay of anxiety and enjoyment, revealing that participants exhibited a notably high level of private enjoyment ($M = 4.16$) and social enjoyment ($M = 4.12$) alongside a moderate level of anxiety ($M = 3.85$). The results align with prior research and suggest a nuanced affective landscape within the English classroom. Specifically, participants demonstrated high levels of enjoyment than anxiety, consistent with findings from previous studies (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Khajavy et al., 2018). These findings underscore the complexity of affective experiences in language learning, where positive emotions like enjoyment coexist with anxiety. While direct comparisons with other contexts must consider variables such as sample size, age, and gender, it is reasonable to suggest that participants generally

experience heightened levels of both enjoyment and anxiety.

In comparison to previous studies, mean scores for enjoyment and anxiety in this study were higher than those reported for international (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), Spanish (Dewaele et al., 2019), and Chinese learners (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). The gender-specific focus of this study aligns with Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) observations that female learners often report higher levels of both enjoyment and anxiety compared to their male counterparts. The heightened emotionality among female learners may be attributed to cultural and social factors influencing their engagement and affective responses in the classroom. In the context of Korean middle school students, the emphasis on academic performance and social conformity may amplify these emotional experiences, particularly in a high-stakes subject like English. Moreover, the study reaffirms previous findings that EFL learners tend to exhibit higher levels of both enjoyment and anxiety compared to counterparts from other countries (Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). The findings align with empirical evidence indicating elevated anxiety levels among exam-oriented learners, particularly in cultures emphasizing saving face in Asian contexts (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). Additionally, the contrast in affective experiences between secondary and university students in Korea may reflect differences in language proficiency, teaching approaches, and institutional environments (Jee & Byun, 2023).

The correlation analysis revealed significant associations among enjoyment, anxiety, and L2 WTC. Higher levels of social and private enjoyment and L2 WTC were positively correlated, indicating that students who experienced greater enjoyment in social interactions and private experiences within the English classroom were more inclined to engage in L2 communication. Conversely, anxiety exhibited negative correlations with L2 WTC and enjoyment, underscoring the detrimental impact of anxiety on communicative behavior. It is consistent with previous results that enjoyment and anxiety have different effects on L2 WTC (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018; Dewaele, 2019).

The multiple regression analysis revealed anxiety as the strongest negative predictor of L2 WTC, followed by private enjoyment as a positive predictor. It aligns with previous findings where anxiety exerted a more substantial negative effect compared to the positive effect of enjoyment at the social level on WTC in Britain (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018), Spain (Dewaele, 2019), China (Peng & Wang, 2022) and consistent with the negative predictive role of anxiety in numerous previous studies (e.g., Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2022; Li et al., 2022). It indicated that the anxiety stemming from foreign language learning often leads students to remain silent, waiting for others to speak or for teachers to provide answers directly, a common occurrence in EFL learning contexts (Lu, 2024).

Conversely, some studies found opposite results where enjoyment was a single significant predictor of L2 WTC, although anxiety negatively correlated with WTC. For instance, Lu (2024) observed that the structural equation modeling revealed a notably positive direct impact of enjoyment on L2 WTC in China. This finding aligns with certain studies suggesting enjoyment to potentially hold more significance as a predictor of L2 WTC compared to anxiety (Bensalem, 2021; Khajavy et al., 2018; Peng & Wang, 2022). There are inconsistencies in the literature, where enjoyment had a significant and robust positive effect on WTC, while anxiety showed a non-significant, attributed to the countering positive effect of enjoyment (Feng et al., 2023). These discrepancies underscore the need to explore further the correlations between these emotions and L2 WTC across various L2 contexts, considering individual and contextual factors before drawing definitive conclusions.

Lastly, the qualitative analysis provided valuable insights into the experiences of Korean EFL learners regarding L2 WTC and emotions through content analysis. Regarding L2 WTC, the main categories included the incentive to receive stamps from the English teacher, self-assessment of English proficiency through communication, and desire to enhance speaking skills through active participation. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of L2 WTC influenced by both external rewards and internal motivations for language improvement. In terms of enjoyment, students predominantly experienced enjoyment during English games and interactions with friends in English. The English bomb game created a comfortable atmosphere conducive to interaction, fostering a positive learning environment. These findings underscore the significance of engaging and interactive language learning activities in promoting enjoyment among EFL learners.

Conversely, anxiety encompassed categories related to encountering unfamiliar words, anxiety during English presentations, and the presence of the teacher. Unfamiliar words, mispronunciations during presentations, and the perceived scrutiny of the teacher triggered the experience of anxiety. Similarly, Jiang and Dewaele (2019) found that teachers' humor and friendly attitude enhanced students' enjoyment, and teachers' unpredictability heightened anxiety among Chinese EFL students. These findings elucidated the various sources of anxiety in the EFL context and emphasized the need for supportive and encouraging teaching practices to mitigate anxiety.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the interplay between positive and negative emotions and L2 WTC among Korean EFL learners. The findings suggest that students in this context experience heightened levels of both enjoyment and anxiety within the English classroom, with anxiety emerging as a potent negative predictor of L2 WTC. These results align with

previous research and underscore the need for targeted interventions to alleviate anxiety and promote positive affective experiences in foreign language classrooms. Additionally, the qualitative analysis highlights the multifaceted nature of L2 WTC, enjoyment, and anxiety, explaining the diverse sources and manifestations of these affective factors.

However, this study has some limitations. First, owing to the convenience of sampling, the participants were all female students in a middle school in Korea. The results of this study may not be representative of EFL learners in Korea. In future research, investigating male and female students at different educational stages would enhance the generalizability of the results. Second, valuable factors may not be examined in this study. Further research must investigate other emotional variables (e.g., flow, grit, and motivation) along with L2 WTC in a Korean context.

Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of the affective dimensions in L2 WTC and emphasizes the importance of promoting positive emotions to enhance engagement among EFL learners. Future research should explore practical strategies for addressing language-related anxieties and fostering a supportive learning environment conducive to language development and communication.

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Appendix
The Questionnaire of Enjoyment, Anxiety, and L2 WTC

Measurement components	Items
Enjoyment	1. I can laugh off embarrassing mistakes in English class. 2. I don't get bored. 3. I enjoy the English class. 4. I learned to express myself better in English. 5. I've learned interesting things. 6. I feel proud of my accomplishments in the classroom, group activities, and discussions. 7. It's a positive and friendly environment. 8. It's cool to know English. 9. It's fun to learn English. 10. Making errors is part of the learning process. 11. The peers are supportive of learning English. 12. The teacher is friendly. 13. The teacher is supportive. 14. We form a tight group. 15. We laugh more in the English classroom compared to other subjects.

Anxiety	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking in my English class.2. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.3. I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.4. I feel confident when I speak in English class.5. I get nervous and confused when I must make an English presentation.6. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation.7. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.8. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.9. I fear other students will laugh at me when I speak English.
L2 WTC	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I am willing to role-play in English in front of the class (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).2. I am willing to give the class a short self-introduction without notes in English.3. I am willing to give a short speech in English to the class without notes.4. I am willing to ask the teacher in English to repeat what he/she just said in English because I didn't understand.5. I am willing to do a role-play in English at my desk with my peers (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).6. I am willing to ask my group mates in English the meaning of a word I do not know.7. I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me how to say an English phrase to express the thoughts in my mind.

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