

# How to Improve High School Students' L2 Writing Enjoyment

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## Abstract

For a long time, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research focused on the influence of individual differences, such as cognition and motivation on language learning. It treated emotion as an irrelevant and irrational factor. In the last decade, however, the rapid growth of Positive Psychology in SLA has led to an "emotional movement". More and more scholars focus on both learners' learning outcomes and individual well-being. Enjoyment as one of the positive emotion, many scholars have focused on it. Writing is considered as the most difficult part of five English skills. This essay explores high school students' L2 writing enjoyment and provides some measures to improve their enjoyment in writing, so that teachers can improve students' writing performance.

## Keywords

L2 Writing Enjoyment; High School Students; English Writing.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background to the Research

In the last decade, the importance of emotion in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field has been gradually recognized by researchers at home and abroad. Stimulated by Positive Psychology, there has been a growing research interest in positive emotions experienced by foreign language learners [1]. Language learning researchers' interest in emotions has mainly focused on a single negative foreign language classroom emotion, like anxiety[2]. Studies on positive emotions are necessary and deserve more attention because they not only facilitate foreign language learning by bringing some cognitive and motivational benefits, but also promote well-being. Most previous studies focused on foreign language anxiety, and researchers have focused more on university students. There is significantly less research on emotional intelligence and foreign language enjoyment among secondary school students, especially high school students.

Writing, as an important expressive skill, effectively promotes the internalization of language knowledge, which in turn facilitates the progression of overall language proficiency[3]. The acquisition of writing skills in a second language presents significant challenges for L2 learners. In the traditional writing teaching method, students only see the results and pay little attention to the process of improving writing. High school students faces the pressure of examinations. Their emotion towards writing is worth exploring.

### 1.2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

From the perspective of Positive Psychology, this study talks about how to improve Chinese high school students' L2 writing enjoyment. The essay has clear theoretical significance. Positive psychology has flourished in the field of second language acquisition in China and abroad and has already accumulated a considerable amount of research findings. However, most previous researches has focused on foreign language anxiety. Less researches focus on foreign language enjoyment and much less on L2 writing enjoyment. This essay can fill the gap and enrich the empirical investigation of emotional intelligence and foreign language enjoyment among high school students.

This essay also has pedagogical implications. This essay demonstrates the important role of academic emotions in L2 writing process. It also calls for teachers to pay attention to learners' emotional experiences. Moreover, this essay provides some suggestions for English teachers to improve their English writing teaching and students' writing performance.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter is a general review of the literature related to this study. It consists of definition of foreign language enjoyment and related researches on foreign language enjoyment and L2 writing enjoyment.

### 2.1. Foreign Language Enjoyment

#### 2.1.1. Definition of Foreign Language Enjoyment

Emotional research in the SLA field has long focused on learners' negative emotions, such as foreign language anxiety. At the beginning of this century, with the establishment and development of positive psychology, the concept of whole-person education, which promotes multiple emotional experiences and informed integration of learners, became popular. Positive emotions in foreign language learning began to receive formal attention from academics, and emotions such as enjoyment, hope, pride, and satisfaction were explored one after another[4]. Among them, enjoyment is considered to be the most common type of positive emotion in foreign language learning, which can effectively enhance students' communicative intentions in class and facilitate their foreign language learning process[5].

Goetz defines foreign language enjoyment as a characteristic enjoyment, a state of positive response to a learning task. Based on the Control-Value Theory of Academic Emotions, Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia argue that enjoyment is an academic activity emotion, a positive one with a high degree of arousal. Learners are likely to feel enjoyment when they feel that academic achievement activities are positively valued and when they are able to do so. According to Chinese scholars Jin and Zhang, in the SLA research field, FLE is a type of trait-like enjoyment that foreign language learners perceive in foreign language learning situations or processes and is closely related to academic situations[6].

This essay refers to Dewaele and MacIntyre's definition of FLE: foreign language enjoyment is "the positive emotion that learners feel after overcoming learning difficulties, completing academic tasks, and achieving psychological needs in the process of learning a foreign language".

#### 2.1.2. Related Researches on Foreign Language Enjoyment Abroad

Abundant researches abroad have focused on foreign language enjoyment. But most of them begin from ten years ago. So this is a relatively new topic.

Dewaele and MacIntyre developed the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale, which measures learners' enjoyment in a foreign language from two dimensions: private enjoyment in the foreign language and enjoyment in the foreign language environment. They added 'teacher-related foreign language enjoyment to the original scale and verified its applicability in the Chinese foreign language learning context. Most Chinese scholars used this scale to test students' foreign language enjoyment[7].

Dewaele et al. used a mixed research approach to investigate the foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety of 1746 foreign language learners from around the world with an online questionnaire. The results showed that foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety were influenced by cultural background and age. Female students are easier to acquire foreign language enjoyment than male students. Saito et al. found that learners' foreign language enjoyment significantly and positively predicted the frequency

of their foreign language use by conducting a study of 108 high school students' foreign language use and foreign language enjoyment over time.

Dewaele et al. also conducted a study of foreign language enjoyment and anxiety in classrooms among 189 high school students in two UK schools who speak English as their native language and French as a foreign language. It was found that foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety were weakly and negatively correlated.

Based on these researches, we can see that scholars abroad have generally found that foreign language enjoyment has close relation with foreign language learning.

### **2.1.3. Related Researches on Foreign Language Enjoyment at Home**

Compared to researches abroad, foreign language enjoyment at home has just begun in recent years.

Chinese scholars Jin and Zhang further investigated the impact of three dimensions of FLE on students' English performance based on a survey of high school students. The results showed that high school students' foreign language enjoyment played an important role in their English learning performance[8]. Li et al. investigated thousands of high school students in China and found that high school students with lower foreign language learning achievement usually had both higher anxiety and lower enjoyment emotions. A subsequent study by Li again showed that foreign language enjoyment affects learners' motivation, classroom engagement, and academic achievement.

Jiang examined the teacher-related factors in Chinese university students' Foreign Language Enjoyment through the focused essay technique. Results showed that the teacher-related factors could be classified into five main categories, including classroom activity organization, teacher characteristics, teacher skills, teaching content, and teacher support[9]. Gu et al. investigated online-learning students' foreign language enjoyment. The study presented that students have moderate level of FLE under the circumstance of online-teaching[10]. Cui and Meng also found that college students have a moderate level of FLE by conducting a study of 276 non-English major students[11].

## **2.2. Enjoyment in L2 Writing**

Despite the abundant literature on foreign language enjoyment, research concerning specific language skills, such as writing, is still sparse. A study systematically examines the relationship between ideal L2 writing self and L2 writing enjoyment, and their effects on L2 writing achievement. Tahmouresi and Papi observed positive associations between ideal L2 writing Self and L2 writing enjoyment and achievement. However, their findings suggest that L2 writing enjoyment was not related to L2 writing achievement[12]. A study presented that ideal L2 writing self can positively predict L2 writing enjoyment in the context of a Chinese university. Li et al. found that students can experience self-achievement emotion like enjoyment, boredom, anxiety, hope etc. Among these emotions, the frequency of positive emotion is higher than negative emotion and enjoyment and boredom can significantly predict L2 writing performance. Yao et al. investigated 679 12th grade students L2 writing enjoyment. The results show that both male and female students' L2 writing enjoyment is relatively low. The participants are from the major city of eastern China. They learn English from a very early age and the English level is generally higher than other west places. So more researches need to be done to make the results more reliable.

## **3. Problem Solutions**

As students' L2 writing enjoyment is relatively low, this part will discuss measures to increase enjoyment in L2 writing.

### 3.1. Adopting the Integration of Reading and Writing Approach

Abundant researches exhibit that the Integration of Reading and Writing can reduce students' writing anxiety and promote English writing. One of the reasons that students feel terrible when they are writing is that they do not know what to say. They can not think of the words to write. Or students write down something that is empty, no substance. However, integrating reading and writing can help students solve this problem. Students first read the text, which can provide some information including vocabulary, expressions and some important ideas or hints. Then students can write their own text based on the given reading material. According to the Input Hypothesis of Krashen, students should have sufficient comprehensible input, so that they can get improved and produce their output. The reading material before writing is the comprehensible input.

### 3.2. Writing Familiar Topics

According to English Curriculum Standards for Senior High (2017 edition, 2020 revision, p.15), the topics of English curriculum are man and self, man and society, man and nature. Under these topics, there are many small topics like family, school life, social relation, environment etc. The writing task should be chose from the these topics and try to get close to students' life. Before writing, teachers can ask students to talk about this topic freely, so that students can share their ideas and the process of writing becomes more interesting. In this process, teachers can also provide some necessary vocabulary or sentence structures to students, to support their writing.

### 3.3. Focusing on Writing Process

The product-oriented method of teaching writing pays great attention to the accuracy of the final goal. If the students fail to produce something satisfactory, they are told to do it again. This kind of practice is fruitless because, without the right approach to writing, the students might produce equally unsatisfactory work again. What really matters or makes a difference is the help that the teacher provides to guide students through the process that they undergo when they are writing. If their writing products are always denied, they will feel frustrated when they write again. The negative emotion will appear once they write. Thus, focusing more on students' writing process can help students increase their writing enjoyment.

There is no widely accepted definition for the process approach to writing. Brown summarizes the features of process writing. Focus on the process of writing that leads to the final written product; help student writers to understand their own composing process; help them to build repertoires of strategies for prewriting, drafting, and rewriting; give students time to write and rewrite; place central importance on the process of revision; let students discover what they want say as they write; give students feedback throughout the composing process to consider as they attempt to bring their expression closer and closer to intention; encourage feedback both from the instructor and peers; include individual conference between teacher and student during the process of composition.

### 3.4. Using Multi-feedback Method.

There are many ways to give feedback to students' writing product. The first way is teacher feedback, which is the traditional one. The other is peer feedback and automated essay scoring. Most teachers only take the teacher feedback. Some student also tend to trust teachers and willing to receive their feedback. Effective teacher feedback should include three parts besides the score. The teacher should also give comments. First, the good aspects that the students have done and teacher's encouragement. Second, the deficient aspects in his writing. Last, teacher's opinion about this topic or the main opinions. But English teachers have too much work to do and most of the time can not give timely feedback, which seriously decrease the effect of feedback.

Peer feedback is that students work together to provide written and verbal feedback on each other's writing problems in order to improve the quality of their writing. can make up teacher feedback and promote learner-centered learning and cooperative learning. The use of peer feedback has positive effect on students' writing competence, writing quality and cognitive ability. Frequently use of teacher feedback makes students feel bored. The use of peer feedback can motivate students and activate students' interest. But the disadvantages of peer feedback is also salient. However, peer feedback is influenced by individual language skills and suffers from a focus on language over content and structure, making it difficult to provide high quality feedback.

The last feedback is automated essay scoring, which is represented by Pigai. This is the product of artificial intelligence. Students upload their writing text on the website. Then the website will analyze the text based on their corpus in several seconds. After analyzing, the website will provide the report about the text. The report mostly includes vocabulary analysis, grammar analysis and structure analysis etc. The total score also presented. Students can adapt their writing text until they get a score that they are satisfied with. This is a new way of feedback. Students tend to have great passion towards this way. So teachers can use this way to motivate students to write and increase their writing enjoyment.

#### 4. Conclusion

This essay talks about how to improve students enjoyment in writing. The author put forward some suggestions through reading literature. Enjoyment in writing is significant, which can affect students' writing performance. This essay has both theoretical and practical implications. For theoretical implications, this essay pay attention to students' emotion based on the positive psychology. More positive emotion towards English, students will have better performance. Most researches has find the importance of enjoyment. But how to increase students' enjoyment is in scarcity. More researches need to be done to explore the effective measures to improve students' enjoyment in writing. For practical implications, this essay remind English teachers to pay more attention to students' emotion. Language learning is a quit boring process. Students need to remember amounts of vocabulary and grammar rules etc. But teachers, as the organizer and guide of students' language learning, is supposed to make efforts to help students feel enjoy during English learning process.

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